

61 MVV **Kwartaal Joernaal**
61 MVA **Quarterly Journal**

Uitgawe 2 / Edition 2
Dec 2022

Munga

Operation Bratstvo

**Special Supplement
Bravo Company 1989**

**Spesiale Bylaag
Die 61 Lager Bier**



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REDAKSIONELE KOMMENTAAR BY DIE TWEDE UITGAWE VAN DIE 61 MVV KWARTAAL JOERNAAL

EDITORIAL COMMENTARY ON THE SECOND ISSUE OF THE 61 MVA QUARTERLY JOURNAL

Die Augustus 2022 Joernaal was baie gunstig ontvang. Dit was 'n waardevolle proeflopie om die konsep vir die volgende 6 jaar in oënskou te neem.

Since the rebirth of 61 Mech as the 61 MVA in 2009, the unit has grown at a rapid pace. Among numerous other events, the monumental task of writing the official 61 Mech History Book *Mobility Conquers* in 2017, stands out on the achievement scale. In 6 years' time 61 Mech will celebrate its Golden Jubilee (50 Years).

Die 61 MVV se visie is om die sowat 20 000 lede wat in die eenheid gedien het in die aktiewe jare, op te spoor en deel van die span te maak. Byna daaglik kom nog nuwe lede by. En hulle bring nuwe feite oor reeds gepubliseerde skrywes met hulle saam. Die 61 MVV het gedurende 2019 besluit om 'n reeks boeke te publiseer oor die verskillende veldslae waaraan die eenheid deelgeneem het.

With the rapid expanding membership totals, a recent history of the past 13 years surfaced. Skouerskure and Battlefield Tours to name just a few. This is history on the move. The main vehicle for this was the 61 MVA Facebook page. But these social media platforms are no guarantee that the current developing events will survive the decades to come.

Daarom het die 61 MVV besluit om 61 MVV Kwartaal Joernaal (61 MVA Quarterly Journal) van stapel te stuur. Daardeur word gepoog om vergete feite te vertfris, die lopende geskiedenis op te teken en 'n spreekbuis vir beide die 61 Meg lede sowel as die 61 MVA daar te stel.

As part of the intended Jubilee festivities in less than 7 years in the future, the 61 MVA will publish a Jubilee Album containing 50 years of 61 Mech. To be able to do this, the 61 Quarterly Journal serves as a repository for ALL events, not just the fighting history.

Die sukses van die Kwartaal Joernaal hang af van die lede se bydraes en die ondersteuning van die publikasie. **SONDER U. DIE LEDE, SAL DIT NET nog 'N dokument bly.**

Ondersteun asseblief die Kwartaal Joernaal deur aktiewe bydraes.

Kindly support the Quarterly Journal by active contributions.

Groete

Redaksie

Omslag Foto - 61 Meg 1989 troepe klaar uit
Cover Photo – 61 Mech 1989 troops clearing out





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Mobilitate Vincere

Vou

Mobilitate Vincere



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Vou



61 MVA Important Dates



2023 Holidays

Jan 1	New Year's Day	Apr 27	Freedom Day	Aug 9	National Women's Day
Jan 2	Public Holiday	May 1	Workers' Day	Sep 24	Heritage Day
Mar 21	Human Rights Day	May 14	Mother's Day	Sep 25	Public Holiday
Apr 7	Good Friday	Jun 16	Youth Day	Dec 16	Day of Reconciliation
Apr 9	Easter Sunday	Jun 18	Father's Day	Dec 25	Christmas Day
Apr 10	Family Day	Jul 18	Nelson Mandela Day	Dec 26	Day of Goodwill

Vou

Glue

61 MVV Voorsitter se Blad



Chairmans Report

Dear fellow 61 Members and families, as 2022 is heading to an end we are once again blessed for the tough year we managed to overcome. For many of us 2022 was a personal challenge. But with the blessing of the Lord, we all still standing united in the 61 family.

After doing two successful tours this year in a very short period, we are delighted with the positive outcome in which our veterans were received by our Angolan friends. Jaap Steyn with the Smokeshell group, and Robert Torrani with the Bravo 1987 group, both made new history in respectively cementing a Memorial piece at the Smokeshell and Bravo 87 goals respectively. Well done gents and ladies.

My family and myself were invited to the Bravo 1987 weekend at NAMPO. In true 61 fashion it was a well organized weekend where brothers and families could laugh, cry and share their experiences of years ago. Met afloop van die Smokeshell toer is die “Backabuddy” fondsinsamelings projek geloots deur Jaap Steyn, in samewerking met Andrew Whittaker en Nicole Dickson. Die projek gaan eerstens konsentreer om HP Ferreira by te staan met sy Mediese probleme, asook die makkerhulpfonds te vergroot op Internasionale vlak. Deel van die veldtog was die instemming van die Munga groep na bespreking tussen myself en Pierre De Jager. Munga 2022 gaan ry vir HP Ferreira en Makkerhulp.

Ek wil byvoorbaat dankie sê aan almal wat so baie ingesit het om die veldtog te loots en vir Jaap Steyn wat dit so positief bestuur. Dit vat baie uit ‘n mens om te oefen vir die Munga sowel as die bestuur van die projek as n geheel.

I want to also thank every member of Exco for the hard work and dedication that 2022 expected from you. Your commitment to this organization is something that few others are blessed with. We are blessed to have you in this team. Last but not least, our Journal Editor, our own Lt Col (Ret) Dawid Lotter, thank you for your willingness to spend so many hours in creating and capturing our stories and history. We are blessed to have you and the team onboard.

From Exco we want to take this opportunity in wishing all our members and their families a Fantastic Christmas and New Year. Let’s make 2023 another special 61 Mech year. God bless and thank you for your constant support.

Mech Greetings

Johan Booysen
61 MVA Convenor

Boodskap van die 61 MVV Beskermheer

As beskermheer van 61 MVV is dit vir my besonder aangenaam om in die Kwartaal Joernaal 'n boodskap te kan plaas. Baie dankie Dawid Lotter vir jou inisiatief in die verband. Jy bly maar 'n belangrike - en onontbeerlike skakel in die 61 Meg MVV ketting.

2022 is besig om vinnig op sy einde af te stuur en dis gepas om aan die einde van 'n jaar voorraad op te neem tov wat ons in die jaar bereik het.

As overseer of the activities of this unique military veterans organisation I can report that I only experienced good and positive activities and results that were achieved during the cause of 2022. To summarise them:



1. The people/team in control of 61 MVA, the Executive Committee, did an excellent job. Johan Booysen (Convener/Chairperson), Manus Myburgh (Administrator), Kevin West (Financial Manager), Jaap Steyn (Project Manager), Rob Torrani (Secretary), and Fanus Hansen (Chaplain) are people that you will only find in a military and 61 Mech related organisation. I have no words to describe the passion in which they drive the organisation. They always act and execute in a way that was familiar to me when I was the commander of 61 Mech Bn Gp in 1983. My whole heart thanks and appreciation to them.

2. South Africa in 2022 is currently experiencing difficult and challenging times in all spheres of life. Our focus during 2022 was to raise funds to support our members and families in need and who are struggling to survive. We, under the leadership of Jaap Steyn, are raising resources/funds to support our members. For all of our members and support organisations of 61 Mech MVA who support us in these endeavours, a great thanks and appreciation. This makes 61 MVA an unique organization in support of its members

3. Ons dink ook in die besonder aan 61 Meg veterane wie gedurende 2022 aan die dood afgestaan is. Ook hulle sal ons nooit vergeet nie. Ons wens hul families wat agter gelaat is, ons innige meegevoel en vertroosting toe.

4. As 'n uiters tevrede Beskermheer wil ek vir al ons lede en ondersteuners baie dankie se vir elkeen se bydrae tot die sukses van 61 MVV. Waar daar nou 'n feesseisoen binnegegaan word, waartydens daar n bietjie gerus moet word, wens ek vir u en u families ons Hemelse Vader se seën toe. Kom ons kyk net boontoe, betoon ons liefde aan hom en wees gehoorsaam aan Sy woord.

Beskermheer
Gert van Zyl



Die 61 MVV Kapelaans Blad

Toksiese wêreld – Toxic Environment

Tydens 'n gesprek, by die reünie van Bravo Kompanie van 1987, gesels ek en Dawid Lotter, en ek noem die term: “toksiese wêreld”. Dawid laat nie die geleentheid verby gaan om my oor die begrip te pols nie. Toe ek so bietjie gaan nalees oor die begrip, besef ek dat ek 'n hele blik vol wurms oopgemaak het met my woordkeuse en wil ek in die volgende paar penstrepe volstaan met my onvolledige verstaan van “toksiese wêreld” en dadelik bely, dat ek, nie naastenby die omvang van die term verstaan het nie.

In my eie gedagte: binne my leef- en werksomgewing is daar veilige ruimtes. Plekke waar ek en my geliefdes gekoester moet en mag word. Maar binne 'n snel veranderende wêreld het hierdie ruimtes egter slegte – toksiese - plekke geword. Binne my gesin, familie, vriendekring moet ons geborge voel, maar dan is daar gesinsgeweld, word 'n kind nie na behore gevoed nie, 'n familielid molesteer 'n kind, verbroekel dekade-oue vriendskappe... Gaan die kind skool toe, 'n plek waar hy/sy veilig geskool moet word, is daar boelies wat treiter, 'n onderwyser/es wat nie die kind se beste belang dien nie, onregverdigheid. By die werk is daar ongeregtheid, ontvang 'n arbeider nie die loon wat hy werd is nie, word iemand oorgesien tydens bevordering.

Die kos wat ek eet, wat voedsaam en heilsaam vir my moet wees, is verwerk met te veel suiker, te veel sout, is geneties gemanupuleer en veroorsaak gesondheidsprobleme. Ek kan nie meer die water uit my kraan drink nie, dit is gekontamineer, ek kan nie in die see swem nie, die water is besoedel, ek kan nie laatmiddag in die buurt gaan stap nie, daar is rampokkers... En so sou ek kon voortborduur oor sosiale-, maatskaplike-, ekonomiese-, politieke-, vriendskaps-, religieuse teleurstellings en uitdagings.

En toe ek langer ek oor die begrip dink, bekruip Paulus se vermaning aan die gemeente in Filippi (Filippense 2:14-15) my: Doen alles sonder murmurering en teësprak, sodat julle onberispelik en opreg kan wees, kinders van God sonder gebrek te midde van 'n krom en verdraaide geslag onder wie julle skyn soos ligte in die wêreld...” (OAV:1953) 'n Krom en skewe



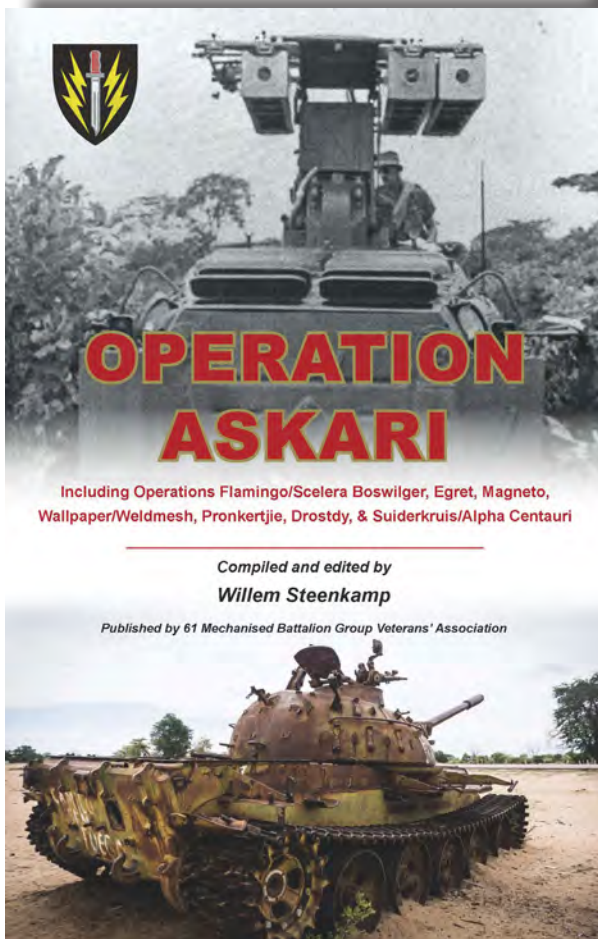
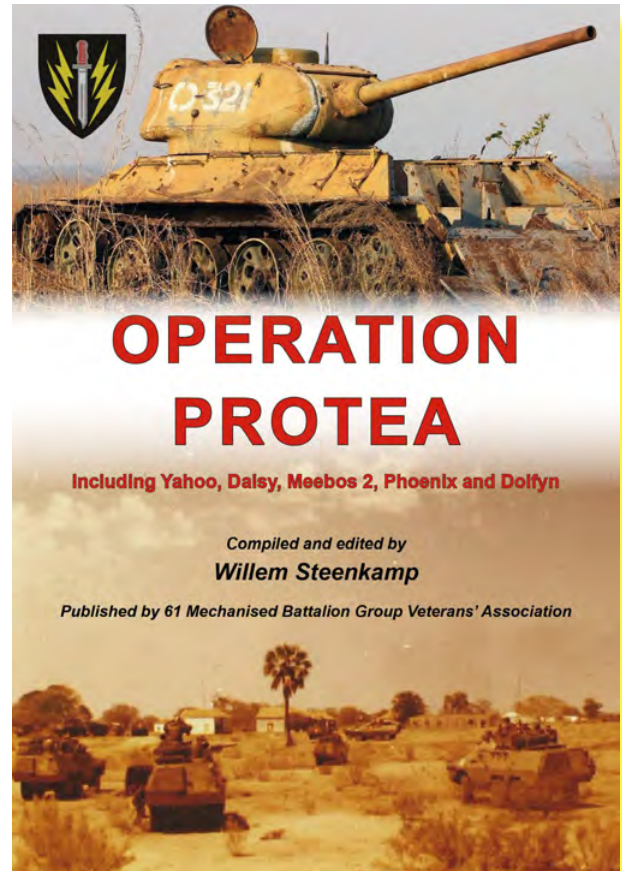
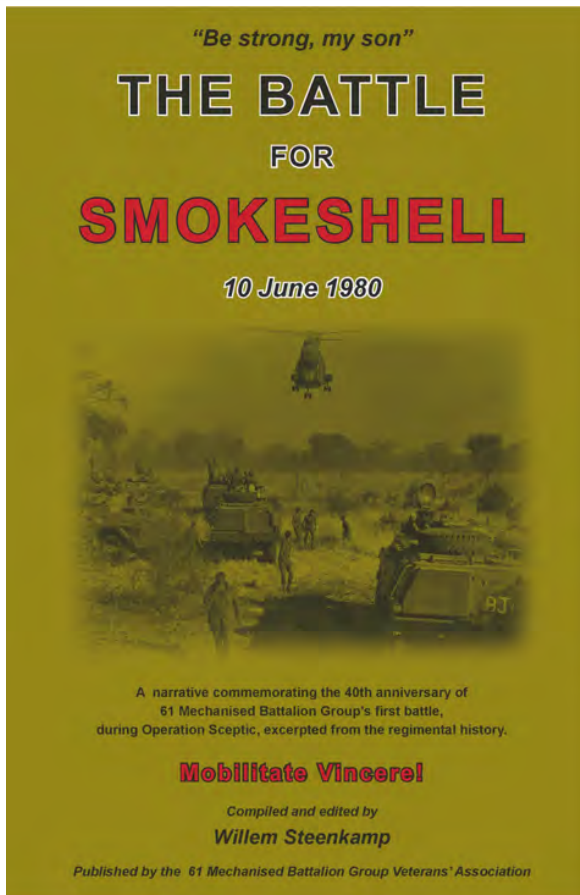
wêreld, 'n toksiese omgewing, is – lyk dit vir my – niks nuuts nie.

Dis Kerstyd 2022. Dit is die tyd wat die liedjies in die “Mall” my aanjaag om nog ietsie te koop, om nog 'n geldjie te spandeer. Maar eintlik is die boodskap van Kersfees, van Advent, 'n boodskap van vrede, van hoop, van liefde, van vreugde, 'n tyd van wag en verwagting, 'n tyd van nuwe voornemens, 'n tyd van kuier by geliefdes en uitreik na ander.

As u hierdie feesgety êrens-iewers 'n kers aansteek, die vlam laat speel oor 'n gebraaide skaapboud, vir u kleinkinders die liggies aan die kersboom aansteek, mag ek en u self onthou om, soos Paulus ons gemaan het, ook ons ligte laat skyn. Mag ek en u die draers van die lig wees, die plek word waar geliefdes tuis-kom, laat ek dan die een wees met integriteit... Mag “hier by ons” die plek wees waarheen mense kan ontsnap, uit 'n toksiese wêreld, na liefde, geborgenheid, versorging, vrede en rus... Vreugdevolle Feesgety aan u almal...

Fanus Hansen
61 MVV Kapelaan

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61 Mech Bn Gp - Gone but never forgotten 1978 - 2005

Historical Background Part 2

About the Badge and the Motto of “61” – “Mobilitate Vincere”



Commandant Roland de Vries was approached by the South African Defence Force (SADF) Heraldic Division early in 1981 concerning the units' emblem. He was duly informed that the 61 Emblem as it was adopted in 1979 had not been officially approved by the relevant higher military authorities. Military emblems could only be adopted through expressed written permission. Such approvals had to be signed respectively by Chief of Staff Personnel, Chief of the Army and finally by the unit commander. Dress and heraldic regulations and approvals were diligently kept and controlled by means of official SADF files and registers.



This process provided for the legal protection of approved insignia and promoted high standards of armorial practice. According to the military heraldic specialists the number “61” on the emblem was also not acceptable. This came as a blow to the serving members “61” at the time. They had become quite familiar and comfortable with the design. It was back to the drawing boards and a new design had to be found. This process resulted in the current officially approved emblem of “61”. The lightening bolt was retained for the units' final emblem that was approved by Chief of the Army in 1981. The official colors of the unit, namely red, yellow and black were retained throughout the unit's history from 1978 until 2005.



The fighting dagger on the unit's black shield aptly symbolizes the elements of skill at arms and courage and valour on the battlefield. 61 Mechanised Battalion Group always new how to achieve its objectives

with vigor; sometimes even under perilous conditions and mostly against all odds. A popular quote many times uttered under trying circumstances by its members was: “We fight through the objective, not onto the objective”. These last-mentioned elements are immortalized by the lightning bolts depicted in yellow on the badge. The four bolts surround a fighting dagger in silver and red, with an apex naturally formed at the bottom of the shield.

Holistically viewed the badge forms an attacking symbol. The symbol embodies the principle of lightning war..... “A conflict conducted with lightning speed and force..... a violent surprise offensive by concentrated air and ground forces..... in close coordination and designed to achieve victory in a minimum of time...

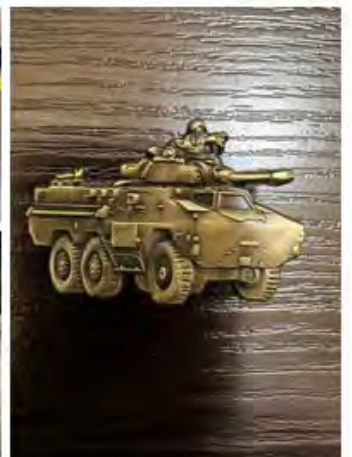
The unit motto chosen in 1981 supported the above-mentioned symbology of “61”. This motto was “Mobility Vincere”. This means the “Destruction of the Enemy through Mobility”. The motto was closely linked to an old cavalry saying also considered as an option at the time, namely: “Mobilitate Vigemus”; meaning in “mobility lays our strength”. “Mobility Vincere” were however eventually chosen as the “61” motto due to its stronger and more offensive oriented connotations.

The unit flash evolved from two previous unit flashes that were adopted respectively by Combat Group Juliet in 1978 and the newly formed 61 Mechanised Battalion Group in 1979. The emblem of Combat Group Juliet was depicted by the letter “J” under a lightning bolt and that of 61 Mechanised Battalion Group by a “61” under a similar lightning bolt.



61 MECH SHOP

<https://61-mech-veterans-online-shop.myshopify.com>



Die 61 Meg Bn Gp Vaandel



Tradisie

Vir so ver terug as 5000 jaar was die eenheid vaandel deel van die slagveld. Die posisie van die vaandel het die posisie van die bevelvoerder aangedui. Die Romeinse Ryk het ook vaandels deel van hul groot leërs gemaak. Dit is in die middeleeue in die leërs van Europa geformaliseer, met vaandels wat met die bevelvoerder se wapen versier was. Die vaandel beliggaam die eer, trots, gees en erfenis van die eenheid. Om die vaandel aan die vyand af te staan was die grootste skande vir 'n eenheid aangesien dit 'n volledige nederlaag gesimboliseer het.

Die 61 Meg vaandelprojek was van stapel gestuur in die bevelstydperk van Kmdt G Louw, seremonieel in gebruik geneem tydens Kmdt H van der Merwe se tyd en finaal neer gelê in Lt/Kol Ettiene Visagie se termyn. Die vaandel is per hand geborduur deur Dilcie

Burne. Die materiaal is van egte sy en so delikaat dat as 'n onnodige naaldgaatjie toegedien was dan het dit gebly. Dus was hoogstaande vakmanskap nodig vir die proses. Die materiaal en gare was uit London ingevoer en ons ambassade aldaar was nou betrokke. Die skakeling was gedoen deur Lisby van der Berg.

Lisby van den Berg

Die materiaal het met die diplomatieke sak tot in Pretoria gekom. Dulcie was ingevlieg tot Kimberley om te kom saam praat oor die lap en uitleg. Ek en sy het nog op ons knieë gestaan in die portaal van my kantoor om te soebat vir meer geld om die kostes te dek. Toe ontdek ons 'n serie met geld vir vaandels en voila daar betaal ons die vaandel.

Die reëls van heraldiek was streng nagevolg. So kon Veggroep Juliet se operasie nie bygevoeg word nie, want toe was hulle nog nie 61 Meg nie. Kmdt Ger-

hard Louw het hard baklei om nog name van gevegsonderskeidings by te voeg. Maar heraldiek het vasgeskop. 'n Veldtog erkenning word nie deur die eenheid bepaal nie, maar word amptelik toegeken deur die Direktooraat van Heraldiek.

Theo De Kock

Tannie Dulcie het in Sandton gewoon en die vaandel is ook daar gemaak. Die totale vaandel is per hand gemaak, Die materiaal was so sensitief dat n verkeerde naald gaatjie, nie weer toe sou gaan nie! Tannie Dulcie se naaldwerk en handewerk was die beste! Ek was bevoorreg om hierdie proses van begin toe die dag met die oorhandiging te kon meemaak! Tannie Dulcie het ook twee miniatuur vaandels (sonder onderskeidings) gemaak.

Die vaandel is op 'n groen geborduurde agtergrond. Alhoewel 61 Meg uit alle korpse bestaan het; soos Pantser, Artillerie, Genie, TDK, PDK, Inligting, Lugafweer, KDK ens, het die eenheid onder Direktooraat Infanterie geresorteer.



Tony Savides

Wat die Springbok en groen agtergrond aanbetref : Die Infanteriesimbool is 'n Bokkop; terwyl die Staan de Springbok destyds die simbool was van die SA Leër. Die groen agtergrond is omdat 61 Meg 'n bataljongroep was (dws hoofsaaklik op 'n infanteriebataljon geskoei). Daar was ongelukkig ook nie destyds 'n Direktooraat Geïntegreerde Korpse nie, en moes die eenhede maar inpas waar die "fondasie" gelê het. Dit sou anders gewees het as die eenheid 61 Gemeganiseerde Regiment was.

Fanus Hansen

Op die ou einde moes ons settle vir die 6 gevegsonderskeidings en een gebiedsonderskeiding (die Suid-Wes-Afrika/Angola 1976-1989 bo aan). Sammajoor Koos Moorcroft (Sammajoor van die Leër) het die week voor die parade in die eenheid aangekom. Troepe het nuwe klere gekry, dit is gewas en gestryk en gepolish, dêmmit ons het mooi gelyk. Ons het lank gewonder of dit nie 'n Gemeganiseerde Parade moes wees nie. Kort voor hierdie parade hét ons 'n gemeganiseerde parade gehad, dis smart!!! Maar die in- en uitklim en die groote van die paradedgrond op Gevegskool (Lohatlha) het die plannetjie gekortwiek!

Die ingebruikneming van die vaandel het op 10 Junie 1994 plaasgevind te LGS. Genl George Meiring het die Vaandel aan Kol Hannes van der Merwe oorhandig het. Vooraan die erewag was Sierra Battery, synde die verteenwoordigers van die mees senior korps van die SA Leër. Die Leërkorps het spesiaal vanaf Pretoria gekom om status aan die verrigtinge te gee. Die RSM was nie baie in sy noppies met die bus op sy paradedgrond nie. Hy moes dit egter maar noodgedwonge so aanvaar, want die orkes hou nie van ver ente loop nie. Die parade was 'n belewenis. Die ex-32Bn troepe, wat toe grootliks 61 se Bravo en Ondersteunings Kompanies was het singend aangemasjeer gekom, en soos wat elke kompanie verby masjeer, sing elkeen in sy eie taal.

Ettiene Visagie

Interessant genoeg, toe die vaandel oorhandig is deur Genl Meiring, het die bokkie bo aan die vaandelstok afgebreek. Dit gebeur gereeld met baie vaandels, want dis maar 'n "flimsy" besigheid, maar die verskil in 61 Meg se geval was dat die vaandel gevolglik sonder die bokkie oorhandig is! En daarom kon hy nooit weer



teruggesit word nie, want vir praktiese doeleindes het die 61 vaandel nooit een opgehad nie. Kmdt van der Merwe het die bokkie in 'n kassie laat monteer en die tradisie het ontstaan dat die bokkie in sy kassie langs die paradegrond moes staan elke keer as die vaandel op parade verskyn het. Tot op die laaste parade tydens die sluiting het dit elke keer sonder uitsondering gebeur! Baie keer het dit 'n moerse fight afgegee wanneer die parade op 'n plek was waar mense nie die geskiedenis geken het nie. Ek moes eenkeer by die Leërkollege in Pretoria 'n sammajoor met die dood dreig voordat hulle die bokkie op sy plek langs die podium laat staan het!

Fanus Hansen

Die parade personeel het kortmou hemde gedra al was dit bibberend koud. Hulle het hulself voorberei vir die koue met die drink van Kahlua likeur. Die funksie daarna het 'n os en skaapbraai behels. Dit was genoem die Fees van die Bees. Twee beeste en 21 skape was gespitbraai (of weg gedra). Ongelukkig het die een bees vrot geword op die spit en moes verwyder word om sodoende nie afbreek te doen aan

die funksie nie. Die bees het vrot geword op die spit, want erens deur die nag het die braaiers (no names, no packdrill) baie gaarder geraak as die bees! Die oggend toe ek en Maj Theo De Kock daar indraai lê die braaiers langs die (vrot) bees en slaap, die stank was onbeskryflik. Ek het nie geweet dat iemand skaap gesteel het nie, kapelane weet nie sulke dinge nie....

'n Paar getroude manne het ook van die oormaat van skaapvleis die geleentheid benut om hulle persoonlike vrieskaste aan te vul. So ook het die inwonende lede van Colenso (aka Klein Gugulethu) nog vir 'n tyd genoeg vleis gehad om by die kaserne te kon braai. Maar niemand het tekort gely nie.

Met die amptelike sluiting van 61 Meg Bn Gp op 18 November 2005 was die vaandel met die nodige sereemonie neergelê en word huidig in die 61 Meg museumlokaal te Ditsong bewaar.



Omuthiya Special

Die aand met die Fees van die Bees moes al die jong leiergroep lede wat nog nie die Omuthiya Special gedrink het nie, hulle beurt gekry. Die lede is op eg militêre wyse in die lokaal ingemarsjeer. Die tradisie het uit 1981 gekom. Die Omuthiya Special het bestaan uit 'n mengsel van 'n paar soorte hardhout en likeurs gemeng in 'n bierbeker en aangevul deur 'n loutwarm bier. Daarna was hulle beskou as behoorlik ingelyf en het die menasie register geteken.

Toffie Grové

Die tradisie van die Omuthiya Special het in 1981 ontstaan. Gert Minnaar en Ariël Hugo was by toe ek my Omuthiya-Special gedrink het!.....ewe braaf sê ek toe daarna ek is nie bang vir nog een nie!!!!.....van wat daarna gebeur het onthou ek nie veel nie behalwe dat ek tussen die lyne rond gekruip het op "all-fours" en ek weet ook dat ek daai aand nie my tent gemaak het nie.....het sommer erens rongelê tot die volgende dag!!!

The “61 Meg Balkie” – Strike Fast, Strike Deep



The troops commonly and with somewhat marked nostalgia referred to the “61” Operational Identification Emblem as the “61 Meg Balkie”. To them it implied the ability to “strike fast, and to strike deep”. This theme developed the true essence of what was at the time accepted as the units’ operational doctrine. General Jannie Geldenhuys was propagating in those days high mobility manoeuvres, employment of extreme fire power and a deep strike and night fighting capability for units such as “61”. These operational concepts suited the temperament of “61” literally and figuratively down to the ground. The expertise acquired by “61” through those operational years to successfully move and manoeuvre at night is embodied by the black shield of the unit emblem.

The “61” Operational Identification Emblem was highly appraised and appreciated by the members of 61 Mechanised Battalion Group. This was especially true to the young National Servicemen serving “61” during those trying, but highly invigorating and operationally exciting active years. In a sense the emblem was a tangible tribute to the National Servicemen and an acknowledgement for selfless service to “61”, South Africa and SWA at the time.

This was typically operational service rendered by them under extremely dire and dangerous operational circumstances. Permanent Force Members, who served side-by-side with them at “61”, viewed and respected them as young men with mettle, character and courage. This in fact is what the Operational Identification Emblem was all about. It was not so easy for the National Servicemen at the time to qualify for other official military awards and medals, such as for their Permanent Force colleagues. This was due to shorter periods of military service, required by the National Service System in South Africa and

SWA, which was prevalent at the time.

The “61” Operational Identification Symbol was designed in 1981 by Commandant Roland de Vries. It was primarily a means to appraise and give recognition to members who served the unit with loyalty, courage and dignity during operations. It was a method used in a combination with others – for example such as effective and vigorous training, planned sport and recreation – to boost the “Esprit de Corps” of the unit. Suitable names were also selected and painted on the Ratels and other combat and support vehicles. These measures were instituted to further enhance unit morale and cohesion and to develop a high sense of equipment awareness, serviceability and care. These simple practices mentioned had an amazing effect on the units’ high level of continued combat readiness and the maintenance of high morale.

The Operational Identification Emblem of “61” was an adaptation of a “Ranger Proficiency Badge” attained by young Captain Roland de Vries for special warfare training that he underwent in Taiwan in 1973. This badge, similar to the one later used by “61” how-



ever, was coloured in blue and yellow. Commandant Roland de Vries in 1981, as the newly appointed Officer Commanding of 61 Mechanised Battalion Group, viewed the Taiwanese Ranger Insignia as extremely suitable for the purpose of a similar operational identification emblem for “61”. The said identification emblem was thus adopted for “61” in 1981 and presented in the striking yellow, black and red official colours of “61”.

The design of the metal badge was in Chrome and Enamel. It was a rectangular bar (upright) in yellow with a black dagger embellished in silver and three red lightning flashes angled diagonally across the blade. The operational badge worn on combat fatigues were made in material in black on a thatch beige rectangular bar (upright) with a black dagger and three black lightning flashes angled diagonally across the blade. The award to members were reflected in Unit Orders and the criteria simply were that: Members had to serve in “61” for a specific period; participated in an operation or helped to ensure success in an operation in which the unit participated have no criminal record.

The awards were normally handed out to recipients on an official “61” parade. The emblem was worn on the right side of the chest slightly above the uniform pocket. It was difficult to attain official and heraldic approval for the badge in 1981 and 1982. The unit members therefore wore the insignia unofficially with pride on their uniforms throughout those years. Many a time Commandant Roland de Vries was reprimanded for members wearing the insignia demi-officially at home or other locations outside the unit-lines.

The first Identification Insignia were awarded to



members who participated in Operation Carrot in SWA in April 1981. This included member of the South African Air Force, SWA Territorial Forces, including the Part-Time Area Force Units, the SWA Police and many others who served with “61” during Operation Carrot. These members all wore the emblem with pride and appreciation, summarily ignoring the non-official status of the emblem. The level and intensity of reprimands towards “61” by higher military officials continued unabatedly – but to no avail. Unit members steadfastly continued to wear the said insignia in the true objective oriented and somewhat daring spirit of “61”.

In November 1981 61 Mechanised Battalion Group participated in Operation Daisy. The unit struck deep into Angola to disrupt SWAPO command and control structures. The Chief of the Army, Lieutenant General Jannie Geldenhuys, accompanied “61” during the initial phases of this operation. For his operational involvement with “61” General Jannie Geldenhuys was awarded the “61 Meg Balkie” at a parade he attended at Omuthiya. This historical event for “61” took place just after the operation ended in December 1982.

General Jannie Geldenhuys gave “61” the permission forthwith to wear the insignia and he undertook to support the unit to attain official approval for the insignia. This was achieved in 1983. An excited Commandant Gert van Zyl, then commanding “61”, phoned Colonel Roland de Vries at the Army Battle School at Lohathla, informing him that “the objective” had been achieved. The Operational Identification Badge of “61” could now be worn officially.

The wearing of the Operational Identification Emblem was suspended in 2007 after the disbandment of “61” in 2005. This decision was promulgated in terms of SA Army Order: Chief Army Corporate Services 317/07 and was dated 27 July 2007.

In May 2021 the Emblem was revitalised when the 61 MVA, under the leadership of Jaap Steyn, received authorisation, supported by the CMVO, from the Deputy Chief of the Army Maj Gen M J de Goede, to take over the management of the “geel messie” from the South African Forces Institute (SAFI). In addition, authorisation was obtained to re-issue such “geel messie” to those who originally were issued with them, and have lost or had it stolen, or to those that qualified, but for whatever good reason, was not issued with one.

Jaap Steyn

We were required to, and have put in place, certain strict protocols which must be followed in order to be considered for such a re-issue. We have also been requested, as part of preserving our heritage, to have protocols in place for current serving members of the SANDF to apply for the re-issue of the “geel messie” where required. We have thus purchased from SAFI the remaining geel messies they had in stock. These are made from the original moulds still held by the SANDF. The protocol to be followed in order to be considered for the re-issue of the “geel messie”, the cost of which will be carried by the applicant. The re-issues will be recorded in a register. This is an important part of our heritage which has been entrusted to us, and we will protect this with the requisite diligence it demands. The application form contained in the protocol must be completed in full in order for it to be considered. Incomplete and poorly completed applications will not be considered. Bare this in mind when completing the application.



Rooi Messie 2013



The 61 Mech Veterans Association decided to issue a special 61 Mech Veterans Association “messie” for free to all the veterans who served with 61 Mech (veterans who took part in an operation or exercise with 61 Mech are welcome too) at Omuthiya, Rooikop and Lohathla as well as those supporters/associates who have joined the 61 Mech Veterans Association at www.61Mech.org.za and whose membership fees have been paid up or renewed and whose membership are currently up to date. This “messie” can then be worn on the left slip of your 61 MVA blazer as the top badge, with the original yellow 61 Mech “messie” directly below it, and then your “skietbalkie” and name tag if you so wish.

The background to this 61 MVA “messie” is red and the lightning bolts yellow to distinguish it from the original 61 Mech Battalion Group “geel messie”. The “rooi messie” was launched at the 61 MVA AGM on 24 August 2013 at the Ditsong National Museum of Military History in Saxonwald,





THE EPIC OF 61 MECH



THE SHARPENING OF THE BLADE

Introduction

The combat blade - be it sword or knife -
Is often a symbol of valour in life;
61 Mech too has a blade at its heart
A combat dagger with lightning dart.
Yet no real dagger this, rather a symbol of daring
But its true meaning is something really worth sharing.

Any blade worth its salt is forged in fire at length;
Drawn from the earth's ore with carbon as its strength.
Folded and beaten, from steel that they create
By craftsman of the forge who harden, heat and shape;
And then by swordsmiths whose perfection is as an art
As they sharpen, polish, hone - and character impart.

If one should ask: "but where is 61's real dagger?"
The answer might be in something as simple as the swagger
Of the men who made up this combat unit of renown;
As their courage and achievement had shown when they wore Brown.
They are the blade that was forged from the steel that was created
From the raw material of the Land for which they fought unabated.

While 61 Mech is the Master Swordsmith in this tale
The craftsmen, forge and primary smiths are also part of the trail.

Smelting the steel

Raw material from across the land, as ore from the earth;
Young men of character, to serve the country of their birth.
To the units drawn where as in a forge they would be formed;
And from mere ore and carbon to majestic blade transformed;
As the craftsmen of the forge, the instructors of the force,
Turned up the heat - for such is military training -
That soon had the recruits sweating and straining
As initial preparation ran its course.

Dissolving the carbon

And then as raw steel - not allowed to melt; basic military drills are learned;
Their metaphorical carbon makes them harder; and respect is earned.
Hard as nails is what is required, but also a softer edge is burned
That ensures execution of drills without hesitation,
Yet allowing adaptation to every situation.

Removing impurities

As basic training wanes and more advanced subjects are taught

The craftsmen of the forge now into swordsmiths are wrought;
They instil the skills and teach the art of war, to men who it seems
Are developing both as individuals and as teams.
Those hard instructors whose approach seemed sometimes cruel
Now prove to be expert teachers of the military school.

Forging the blade

The toughness instilled during previous training merges
With the skill and art as a new dimension emerges;
With a fresh appreciation that the craftsmen they often hated
Are masters of an art that by many is rated
As unique and equal to, or better, than many
In the civilian world; where “they would earn scarce a penny”.

As the blade forms, so does a new dispensation
And the men experience a different sensation.
No longer looked down upon by their seniors it seems
But now being forged into credible teams.
Every man a link in an unbreakable chain
With the emergence of a new and daunting aim.

Coating the blade

Operational deployment now freely discussed
And a more focussed training clearly a must.
Own corps and mustering skills are all very well,
But in combat operations it's combined forces that tell.
So individual, team and corps skills are coated
By combined arms training; as integration is promoted.

Shaping the blade

Different elements into a new shape formed and recognised
Soldiers of different callings - now all proudly “mechanised”.
Corps values and skills still valued and highly rated
But a new title and honour by this effort now created.

A blade stands ready - for operational deployment zoned;
Yet still not fully polished, with edge not yet finely honed.
Interdependence and support as dogma ingrained;
Former instructors and officers as part of the team trained.

To 61 Mech now to prove their mettle
And the issue of “where's the blade?” to settle.

Polishing and sharpening

Well trained perhaps, yet not combat-ready nor tried;
Final polishing and fine honing still required.
Combat team training of a new dimension
Totally focussed on battlefield intention.

Master Swordsmiths now appear, legends in their prime;
Their polishing cloths experience, their honing stones sublime.
SOPs as honing stones, the combat edge to hone
Lessons learnt from past operations to drive the training home.

The final touches

A blade alone is but a mere blade; of very limited use;
A hilt it needs to control and steer and effectiveness to induce.
Skill at arms and in the art of war - none better for a hilt to form;
And 61 proved that its leaders were far beyond the norm.

A true combat dagger now was ready: to parry, cut and thrust
At any enemy or opposing force that dared to test its crust.
A mighty blade it had now become; controlled by masters of the art;
And its sharpness and its polish on its men it did impart.
A short blade perhaps yet lengthened at any call
By ingenuity and mobility - the spine of 61 Mech's core.

So this was how 61's famed messie was born and to perfection grew;
From humble ore and carbon to a blade as true as blue,
That proved its mettle and its worth in many a combat situation
Deserving, as it often was, of many a citation.

A blade of finest steel – young lads who in the forges were enveloped
And into men of steel and mechanised soldiers were developed.
With a hilt of command and control by masters of their craft,
With WOs and NCOs joining hilt and blade with the finest shaft.

Conclusion

So, from craftsmen at the forge to swordsmiths at the front;
All masters at their levels and art and who often bore the brunt
Of those who would deride them as incapable of other work;
Yet whose pledge to their calling and to duty they would never shirk.
Their skill at arms and knowledge that to their men they could impart
Saved many a life when the chips were down, with other daggers at their heart.

From roughest training to finest honing; a journey of great dimension shared
That provided a combat dagger that with the finest swords could be compared.

Combat officers, WOs and NCOs; drawn from the Permanent Force core
Pursuing one aim - leading teams of steel to the fore.
Supplemented and complemented by junior leader streams
And the men of steel - now all proudly part of effective combat teams.

61 Mech - a formidable combat force; united as a single blade
A combat dagger of the highest grade;
Wielded with courage and success in countless clashes.
"Victory through Mobility" as the dagger proudly flashes!

Brig Genl (Ret) T Savides

Die 61 Meg Gedenknaald se lang tog



So het dit als begin

Niks wat in 61 Meg gebeur het was somer net-so nie. Alles wat in die eenheid se 28 jarige bestaan gebeur het, het gegroei vanuit lesse geleer. Soos elke jaar verby gegaan het, het die eenheid getrou aan sy ethos, altyd maar vorentoe beweeg. Die strewe was altyd – “Ons Konsolideer op die Beweeg”.

Ethos beteken; gebruik / gewoonte / karakter in Grieks en is omskryf deur Aristoteles (384 VC) om na 'n persoonlikheid te verwys, met spesifieke klem op die balans tussen oorhaastigheid en omsigtigheid. Binne die 61 Meg konteks verwys dit na die praktyke en waardes wat die eenheid onderskei het. 'n Ethos wat selfs na vele dekades nooit verflou het nie – selfs en veral nadat die eenheid amptelik ontbind het. Die 61 Meg Gedenknaald het 'n simbool geword van die Ethos *toe – nou – verder*. Oor sewe jaar sal die eenheid sy Jubileum (50) jarige bestaan herdenk. Niemand kan voorspel hoe die nabye en verre toekoms

sal ontwikkel nie. Maar een ding is 'n voldwonge feit – Die eenheid se nalatenskap sal bly voortleef soos die Romeinse Praetorian Guard deur die simbool van die Gedenknaald. En selfs sou dié vernietig word deur die verloop van toekomsgebeure, sal die Ethos bly voortbestaan want “Once something is rendered into reality, it cannot be removed” (Einstein).

Die eenheid het sy ontstaan en bestaan te danke aan 'n spesifieke behoefte tydens die opbou van die Bosoorlog. Toe Kmdt Johan Dippenaar op 5 Januarie 1979 met sy gesin op Oshakati aangekom het, was die 61 Meg sterkte presies twee persone nl. Kmdt Dippenaar en sy logistieke offisier Lt Neels Halgryn. Dit sou binne maande vermeerder tot meer as een-duisend lede. Kmdt Dippenaar se eerste taak was om 'n geskikte standplaas vir die voorgename eenheid te vind. Hy het die so-na-as-moontlik ideale plek gevind sowat 20 km noord van die bestaande Oshivello basis in Suid Ovamboland. Die gebied was yl bevolk en wye opleidingsterrein vir gemeganiseerde opleiding

was in oorfloed. Hy het dit Omuthiya genoem wat beteken - Kameeldoringboom; 'n meer gepaste naam vir die plek waar 61 Meg gebore sou word kon mens beswaarlik aan dink. Die Kameeldoring kan tot 20 meter hoog word, wat hom laat uitstaan bo sy omgewing. Hy is baie droogtebestand. Die hout is donker-rooi-bruin van kleur en uiters dig en sterk.

Kmdt Dippenaar het die basis uitgemeet en met behulp van 'n klein Geniekonstruksie element begin bou aan 'n kombuis, menasie, stortgeriewe en sement blaai vir die tente. Die bouwerk het fluks gevorder; veral met die eerste troepe se aankoms as arbeid. Uitrusting en voorraad het snel begin invloei en die basis het begin vorm aanneem. Binne die eerste maand het dit duidelik geword dat Swapo se eerste jaar van diep infiltrasie afgeskop het. Die deug van konsildeer-op-die-beweeg was alreeds in Februarie 1979 nodig toe ongeveer 250 insurgente die Nkongo basis 15 km suid van die Angolese grens aangeval het. Op 26 Februarie het die insurgente 'n wegstaan bestoking op die Elundu grensbasis uitgevoer. Operasie Rekstok was in volle gang. Die taktiese hoofkwartier het van Otavi na Tsumeb geskuif met Kmdt Dippenaar in bevel. Die kompanie was ontplooi te die Tsumeb skietbaan, Tsintsabis, Okakuejo in die Etosha Wildtuin en Otavi.

Tussen 18 en 20 Maart 1979 word tekens van groot groepe insurgente in die Tsumeb omgewing waargeneem en later ook te Okahandja, noord van Otjiwarongo en ook te Tsintsabis. Die lesse hieruit het Kmdt Dippenaar ('n gesoute Pantserkorps offisier) geleer dat 61 Meg so veelsydig as moontlik voorberei moes word. Intussen het die vestiging van die Omuthiya Basis goed gevorder en is op gepaste wyse op 17 November 1979 amptelik geopen deur die Administrateur generaal, Dr Gerrit Viljoen,

Tydens 1980 sou die siel van 61 Meg as 'n hoogs doeltreffende konvensionele gevegseenheid vorm aanneem. Dit sou 'n impak hê op die res van die eenheid se Bosoorlog geskiedenis.

Swapo infiltrasies het in intensiteit toegeneem en in April 1980 is voorbereidings getref vir die eerste 61 Meg oorgrens operasie. Die wye onbevolkte gebied noord van Omuthiya het sy waarde gewys. 'n Oorwoë Swapo Basis kon voorberei word en verskeie uiters realistiese lewendige aanvalle is daarop geloods. Die eenheid het op 10 en 11 Junie die Swapo bevel en beheer sentrum te Chetequera aangeval en vernietig.

Die lewensverlies aan 61 Meg verliese was hoog. Dertien lede het gesneeu.

Ratel Roepsein 20:

74391806 PE Lt.Hannes du Toit

Ratel Roepsein 21:

76338946 BG Sktr FJ Loubser

77217907 BG Sktr PJ Joubert

70518303 BG Sktr CJ Venter

Ratel Roepsein 21A:

76464809 BG Sktr GJ Kemp

76389238 BG Sktr JH Fourie

Ratel Roepsein 21C:

75222695 BG Cpl P Kruger

77210839 BG Sktr SM Cronje

77412153 BG Sktr PW Warrenner

772605788 BG Sktr FJ Lello

77471423 BG Sktr MC Luyt

76395813 BG Sktr RN de Vito

76325646 BG Sktr AJ Madden

Die nadraai van die aanval was gehul in intense emosies. Alhoewel die gedagte aan 'n eenheids monument met die name van die eenheid se gesneuweldes reeds in 1979 by Kmdt Dippenaar opgekom het, het Ops Smokeshell die behoefte beklemtoon.

Een van die uitgeskiete Ratels is silwer geverf en het te Omuthiya as uitstalling gedien. Dit het nie by almal byval gevind nie en is deur Kmdt de Vries in 1981 verwyder en terug gestuur na 4 VRP. Volgens Brig Genl Tony Savides was die Ratel herstel en het weer in sirkulasie gekom.

Toe Kmdt Dippenaar dus die beplanning van 'n gedenkmonument van stapel gestuur het, het almal





entoesiasties deelgeneem. In navolging van die vorm van gedenkmonumente uit die geskiedenis het Kmdt Dippenaar besluit op die Obelisk tradisie. Die woord beteken “spit, spyker, spitspilaar” en verwys na ‘n lang, vierkantige, smal monument wat van onder af nouer loop totdat dit eindig in ‘n piramidevormige punt, die sogenaamde pyramidion.

Die 61 Meg Obelisk was in die middel van ‘n sirkel geplaas. Die naald was op ‘n vyfhoekige marmer voetstuk (die vyfhoekkasteel van die SAW) geanker. Aan die onderkant van die skag, sowat 30 cm van die basis op die kasteel voetstuk was die 61 skouerflits geëts.

Die flits was die een soos dit in 1979 as korrek aanvaar is. Dus; die skild met die letters “61” met ‘n enkel weerligstraal wat vanaf bo regs afdaal na links bo die “61”. Die flits het later heraldies verander maar toe was die monument reeds vervaardig. Dus het die ou flits behoue gebly. Die buitesirkel het bestaan uit tien eweredig gespasieerde opgeboude voetstukke met ‘n helling na buite. Hierop was die marmerblaaie met die name van die gesneuweldes, met die toepas-



like datums en die naam van die spesifieke operasie vasgesit. Die spasiëring was sodanig dat addisionele voetstukke ingevoeg kon word indien die behoefte dit vereis het. Die marmer was uit Karibib verkry en die kuns en vormwerke was deur Karibib Marmorwerke (P O Petzold) gedoen. Na vervaardiging het die graniet gedeeltes sowat 1,2 ton geweeg.

Kmdt Dippenaar kon egter nie die oprigting van die monument as bevelvoerder beleef nie aangesien hy in 1981 opgevolg is deur Kmdt R de Vries. Die oprigting was bestuur deur Maj T Rall wie die 61 Meg tweede in bevel was. Alhoewel die Monument in 1982 opgerig was, is daar twyfel of die toe amptelik ingewy is. Die algemene onthou is dat die wyding in 1984 plaasgevind het.

Vir die res van 61 Meg se verblyf op Omuthiya tot 1989 was ‘n gedenkparade by die Gedenksteen gehou op of naby 10 Junie, afhangende van die eenheid se ontplooiings.



1984 - Gedenknaaldparade

Wrn Philip McLachlan

Ek verbeel my dat hierdie parade gehou is om die gedenknaald te onthul, maar ek mag dalk my feite verkeerd hê. Wat ek wel goed onthou is dat die hele basis vir omtrent 'n week lank hard gewerk het om al die voorbereidings vir die parade te tref, tente is opgeslaan, grond is gehark, chicken parades is 50m buite om die basis gedoen en die hoofhek se wagkamer is geverf.

Die Parade

Die Sondag van die parade het 'n hele aantal senior offisiere met hul gades die verrigtinge bygewoon. Ons was almal in kordonne aangetree rondom die vier-

kant agter die Opskamer. By die gedenknaald het vier sersante (Artillerie, Pantser, Infanterie en 'n Tiffie sersan) stelling ingeneem en 'n pragtige vertoning met geboë hoofde en hul gewere gedoen. Na afloop van die parade is daar 'n groot noenmaal aangebied waar al die senior offisiere ook teenwoordig was.

KM Rowers en hoofhek diens

Die een minder goeie gedeelte van 'n andersins perfekte dag was die feit dat daar nie reëlins getref is vir 'n erewag om die BBP's by die hoofhek af te sien nie. Ongelukkig vir ons as KM Rowers het die 5 SAKK ouens bekend gestaan as goeie paradegrond soldate en is ons onmiddelik opgekommandeur om na die hoofhek te gaan. Die vyf SAKK ouens moes presenter gewere en allerlei snaakse toertjies met hul gewere uitvoer terwyl Erasmus en Van der Westhuizen die hek sou beman.

My werk was om na die aankomende voertuie te marsjeer, te bepaal watter rang in die voertuig was en dan met 'n bulderende stem te skree om die hek oop te maak vir 'n spesifieke rang.

High Brass en Troepe

In basies het hulle ons geleer om as troepe liever weg te kruip as 'n rang hoër as die van kolonel op jou sou afloop. Op hierdie spesifieke dag het 'n kolonel vir my soos 'n troep gevoel. Ek kan nie onthou hoeveel lede van die Generale Staf daardie dag by die hoofhek uit is nie, maar dit was baie.

Die Generaal wat eintlik 'n Brigadier was

In een van die laaste voertuie wat verbygekom het, het ek 'n rang aangetref wat ek nog nooit vantevore gesien het nie (drie sterre en 'n kasteel). My kop het van senuwees heeltemal toegeslaan (onthou ek was maar 19), toe skree ek maar, "Maak oop vir die Generaal!"

AO2 Kobus Kemp (toe KSM van Bravo kompanie) was as senior adjudant offisier ons bevelvoerder. Na hierdie oordeelsfout van my onthou ek nog goed hoe hy my met die terugmarsjeer tereg help, "Dis 'n brigadier, jou pokken yahoo!"

Tot vandag toe sal ek 'n brigadier se rangtekens nooit weer vergeet nie!



Gedenknaald en Russiese BRDM



diens gesterf het. Dankie dat U ons lewens gespaar het in die operasies. Hou ook asb U wakende Hand oor ons na die onbekende toe, Amen.”



Die Gedenknaald was ook vir ander seremonies gebruik. So was Bravo Komp 1987 se leiergroep en die lede in Desember 1986 by die naald ingesweer.

Die Einde van 'n Era

RSM J Kemp

Nou besef ek en alle lede wat op Omuthiyabasis was, die tyd het gekom en die tyd het gegaan. Ons gaan verhuis na Walvisbaai enklawe.

Die Saterdag toe ek en die helpers wat my gehelp het om die naald af te haal het ek 'n kort gebed opgesê en 'n traan gepink. Dit was een van die seer dae wat ek beleef het naas die veiling voor ons onttrek het. Ek het dit nie bygewoon nie, dankie aan Kommandant Muller.

Vir oulaas het ek stadig om die gedenknaald geloop, elke naam gelees en 'n gebed opgesê: “Hier is 61 Meg Bn Gp manne se name wat met hul lewe die hoogste offer betaal het. Die Here het gegee en geneem, Hy weet dat hierdie manne vir hul Land, Volk en Gods



Op 22 November 1989 het die laaste van 61 Meg se subeenhede te Omuthiya Basis oorgeslaap. Alle uitrusting was reeds verwyder en of in transito of te Walvisbaai. Op 23 November het die laaste gevegelemente die operasionele gebied verlaat. RSM Kemp was toe reeds in Walvisbaai. Voor sy vertrek



het hy persoonlik toegesien dat die 61 Gedenknaald versigtig uitmekaar gehaal word en stewig in kratte verpak word. Hy het verseker dat dit veilig in die O Kompanie stoor te Walvisbaai gestoor word. Dit het tydens die bevelstydperk van Kmdt M Muller plaasgevind. Toe Kmd G Louw bevel oorgeneem het in 1991 het hy die Gedenksteen so verpak gevind. Dit het nie sin gemaak om die Gedenknaald op te rig voor daar sekerheid was oor die eenheid se permanente standplaas nie.

In Oktober 1991 het 61 Meg per lug, per pad en per spoor finaal van Walvisbaai afskeid geneem en vertrek na hul nuwe standplaas te die SA Leër Gevegskool. Vroeg in 1992 het Kmdt G Louw en RSM J Kemp besluit dat die 61 Gedenknaald moes herrys. Die aanvanklike beplanning was dat 61 Meg hoofkwartier in sy tydelike lyne sou bly totdat 'n nuwe hoofkwartier vir die Gevegskool se hoofkwartier voltooi was. Dan sou 61 Meg die ou hoofkwartier betrek. Dit inaggenome was dit logies dat die Gedenknaald voor die LGS hoofkwartier opgerig sou word. Dit het weldra duidelik geword dat die bou van die LGS nuwe hoofkwartier weens verskeie redes nie sou plaasvind nie. Die LGS hoofkwartier het nie geskui nie en die Gedenknaald was nie by die 61 Meg eenheids hoofkwartier soos dit behoort het nie. Op die regte of verkeerde plek – dit het nie afbreek gedoen aan die jaarlikse 61 Meg Bn Gp se jaarlikse herdenking nie.



Die Lomba Klok

PJ Cloete

Die klok was op die slagveld gekry na 3 Okt 1987 toe 47 Bde vernietig was deur 61 Meg. Op Kapt PJ Cloete se instruksie was die klok op 2 Lt M Bremer se Ratel gelaai. Die teenwoordigheid van die ongewone fonds op die slagveld het verskeie bespiegelings tot



gevolg gehad. Was dit buit? Het dit 'n godsdienstige betekenis vir 47 Bde gehad? Die vraag bly onbeantwoord.

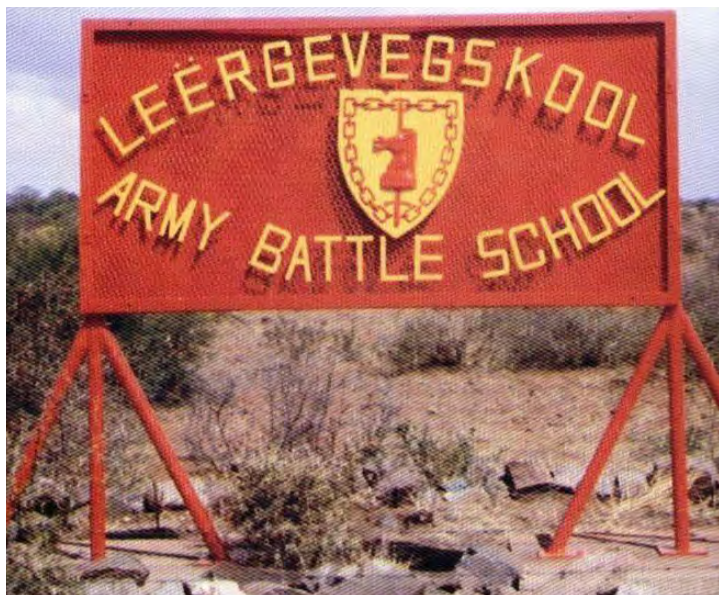
Martin Bremer

Die klok is natuurlik redelik swaar en my arme crew moes elke keer die klok “man handle” om hom uit die pad te kry van die enjin klappe. Ek onthou ook hoe die klok van tyd tot tyd “geref” was in latere kontakte. Die gewone klop klop van iets wat die Ratel se romp vang is nou en dan afgewissel met 'n ping-ping! Ek kan nie onthou wanneer en aan wie ons die klok oorhandig het nie. Ons sou dit seker op 'n stadion

op 'n log voertuig gesit het, miskien net voor ons die voertuie aan die nuwe inname oorhandig het.”

Danie Laas

Een van my nagmerries van Modular was daai klok! As die bevelvoerder van die agterspan was dit my plig om die klok uit te bring. Ek sal dit nooit vergeet nie, Mavinga se aanloopbaan was papnat en die flossie kon nie stop nie en moes bly beweeg en ons moes die klok op kry. Wat 'n gesukkel, as ons die klok opgetel het was die flossie 30m verder. Die laaimeester het gesê die flossie moes omdraai, en dis nou of nooit en met bomenslike krag het ons hom opgekry.



Die klok het uiteindelik op Omuthiya beland en bestem vir die eenheidskroeg op Tsumeb. Die bouwerk van die kroeg was begin, maar dit was amper teen die einde van die Bosoorlog. Die kroeg “Lomba 100” was in 1988 onder die bevelvoerderskap van Kmdt M Muller voltooi. Kort daarna het die oorlog opgehou en die klok is saam met die Gedenknaald na Walvisbaai vervoer. Daar het dit in O Kompanie se stoor gelê totdat die eenheid na Lohathla verskuif het. Hier was die “Lomba 100” kroeg herbou en was die klok aldaar in 61 Meg se lyne opgerig. Dit het bekend gestaan as die “Hind Memorial” ter nagedagtenis aan 2 Lt A Hind wat op 3 Oktober 1987 gesneeu het. Die “100” naam is deur Kapt PJ Cloete gevestig. 87 (Jaar) + 10 (Oktober Maand) + 3 (Dag 3 Okt) = Totaal 100. Met die ontbinding van 61 Meg in 2005 is die klok teruggevoer na 1 SAI Bn in Bloemfontein. Van hier is dit verskuif na die Ditsong Museum in 2010 om 'n uitstallingseenheid saam met die Gedenknaald te vorm.

Die Stryd om die Gedenknaald.

Gedurende die volgende tien jaar het die 61 Meg bevelvoerders een na die ander gepoog om toestemming te kry om die Gedenknaald te skuif na die 61 Meg lyne. Maar die LGS Generale bevel het geweier





om afstand te doen van die Gedenknaald. In 2001 het die samestelling van 61 Meg verander. Waar dit altyd 'n bataljongroep was met artillerie, pantser ens. direk onder bevel, het dit weer net 'n infanterie bataljon geword en die ander korpse het terug gekeer na hulle onderskeie formasies. Toe Kmd E Visagie in 1999 bevel oorgeneem het, het hy soos sy voorgangers gepoog om toestemming vir die skuif van die Gedenknaald te verkry. Weereens het die Generaal van die Gevegskool geweier. Die formasie sou moeilik van hierdie estetiese status simbool afskeid neem. Synde die korrekte benadering nie geslaag het nie,



het Kmdt E Visagie met 'n tipiese gemeganiseerde benadering vorendag gekom. "Konsolideer op die beweeg".

Nadat hy homself vergewis het dat 61 Meg nie meer onder die bevel van die LGS geresorteer het nie, het sy plan vorm aangeneem.

Hy sou die 61 Gedenknaald net doodeenvoudig gaan vat. Dit was immers 61 Meg se eiendom en was op die eenheid se voorraad inventaris. Die sukses van sy plan het afgehang van deeglike voorbereiding, geheimhouding, blitsoptrede en om dit moeilik te maak vir die LGS Generaal om die uitslag te verander. Sou die plan iewers tussen die fases skeefloop, sou hy die status quo moes aanvaar. Daarvoor het hy nie kans gesien nie. Die mees kritiese tyd vir sukses was die dag en tyd van die LGS se bevelsverandering.

'n Ereplek is in die middel van die 61 Meg hoofkwartier, op die grasperke, langs die eenheidsvlagstasie, geïdentifiseer. Die fondamente is voorberei. Die uitleg was so na as moontlik aan die oorspronklike Omuthiya plan. Spesiale metaalklemme is vervaardig om die naald op te lig en te vervoer. Die hyskraan van die Mobilift is gediens en 'n Kwê-100 is uitgevoer met sponsmatrasse vir die beweging.

Op die bepaalde tyd en uur is die hervestiging span ontplooi. Verassing was die sleutelwoord. Die marmerblaaie op die eweredig gespasieerde opgeboude voetstukke wat die buitesirkel voltooi het was is eerste verwyder. Dit het die spasie geskep vir die Mobilift om naby aan die naald te kom vir die finale uitlig. Toe gebeur die onverwagte. Brig Genl Nkonyeni stap toevallig daar verby onderweg na 'n vergadering. Tot sy verbasing en misnoë sien hy die naald halpad in die lug hang. Hy roep Kmdt Visagie en storm na sy kantoor met Kmdt Visagie in sy spore. Die hervestigingspan was vir 'n oomblik onseker.

Maar dit was kortstondig. Kmdt Visagie het so in die verbygaan aan 2 Lt Stoney Steenkamp gefluister dat hy die generaal sou besig hou. Die span moet met dubbel spoed voortgaan met die verskuiwing.

In Brig Genl Nkonyeni se kantoor het, soos Kmdt Visagie dit beskryf, 'n "vertragings geveg van epiese omvang" gewoed. Die generaal was vasbeslote om die skuif te verhoed. Visagie eweneens vasbeslote om te vat wat 61 Meg se eiendom was.



Vrydag, 18 November 2005, was 'n hartseer dag vir **61 Meganisasie Bataljon** op **Lohatla** toe die vaandel van hierdie bataljon vir die laaste keer verwyder is met die sluiting van die eenheid. Lees die boodskap van die bevelvoerder op bls. 1 van **KALAHARI EXPRESS** (Foto: Ansie Olivier)

Intussen werk die span buite koorsagtig en met spoed voort. Enersyds om die verskuiwing te doen en andersyds om nie in die omgewing te wees as die Generaal en Kmdt Visagie uit die kantoor uit kom nie. Die plan het gewerk. Toe die twee uit die Generaal se kantoor uitkom, was die gedenkmonument weg en net die betonrommel het aantoon dat daar op 'n stadium 'n monument was.

Die Generaal het met 'n geslote gesig ongeveer vir 'n halwe minuut stilstwyend na die leë plek gestaar. Toe het hy Kmdt Visagie 'n lang en uiters betekenisvolle kyk gegee, omgedraai en met 'n stywe rug na sy kantoor terug gestorm.

By die 61 Meg eenheidslyne is die naald dadelik op sy nuwe basis geplaas en stewig vasgesement. Kmdt Visagie het besluit dat 'n verdere voorsorgmaatreël nodig was, want hy was nie heeltemal oortuig dat die woedende Generaal bloot die nederlaag sou aanvaar nie. Kmdt Visagie het 'n opruimingspan teruggestuur om al die bourommel wat nog op die ou plek oor was te verwyder. Gou was daar geen teken dat daar ooit 'n

Gedenkmonument buite die CTC-hoofkwartier was nie.

Gelukkig het die operasie se waagmoed die Generaal tog beindruk. Na alles effe afgekoel het, het Nkonyeni en Visagie "die kwessie vriendskaplik" opgelos, Generaal Nkonyeni het die eerste gedenkdiens by die 61 Gedenkmonument in die 61 Meg Eenheidslyne bygewoon.

61 Meg Bn Gp word Gesluit

Op 17 November 2005 was die laaste gedenkparade gehou. Op 18 November is die eenheid ontbind en die oorblywende personeel na 8 SAI Bn te Upington verplaas. Die beskerming van die Gedenknaald is oorge- dra aan die sluitings hoofkwartier wat in 2017 finaal ontbind het. Maj Jan du Preez het uiteraard nooit 61 Meg bevelstatus geniet nie maar die geskiedenis sal onvolledig wees sou mens dit uitlaat.



volledige name verskyn ook op die Muur van Herinnering by die Voortrekkermonument in Pretoria.

61 MVA die Wettige Beskermheer

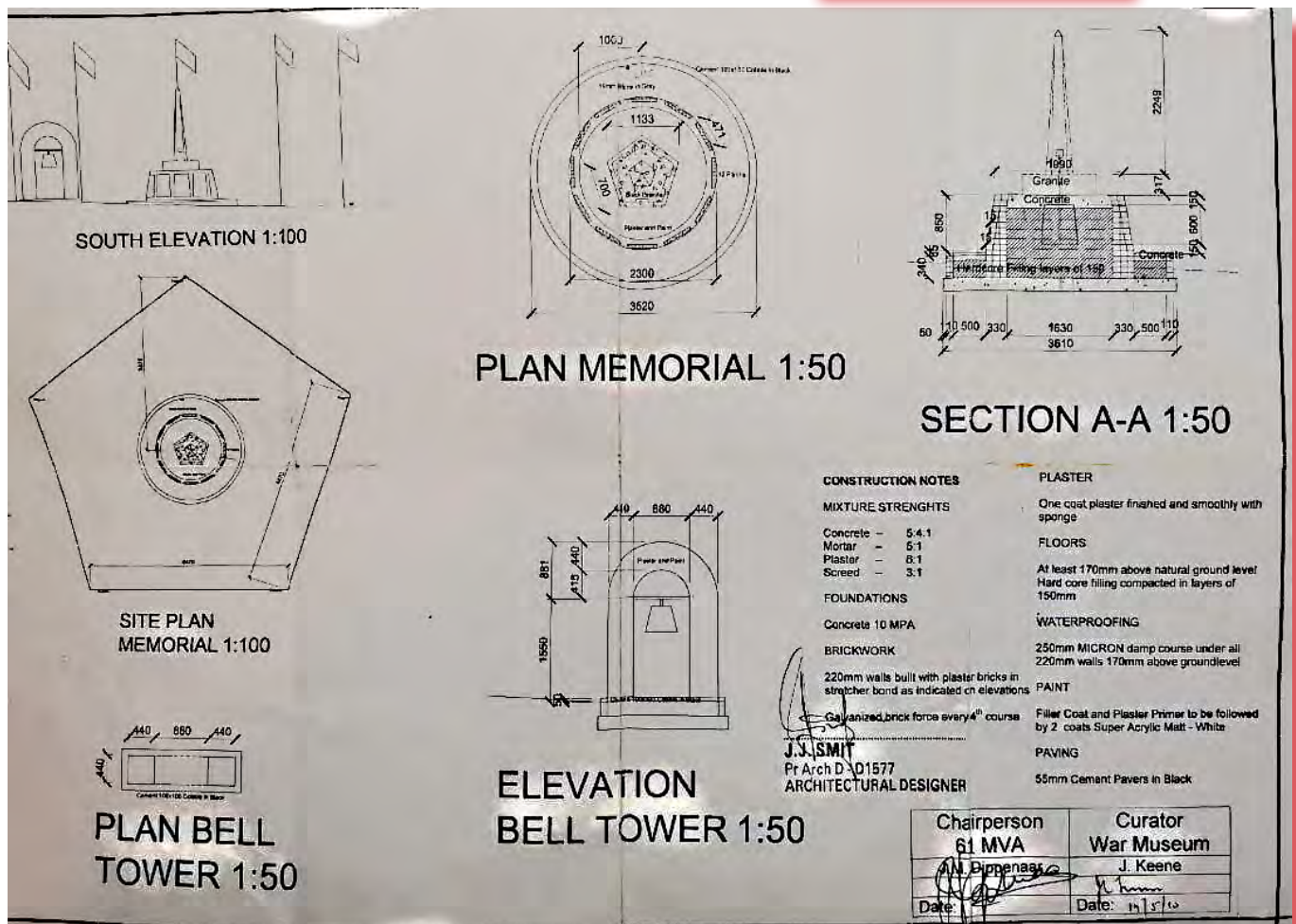
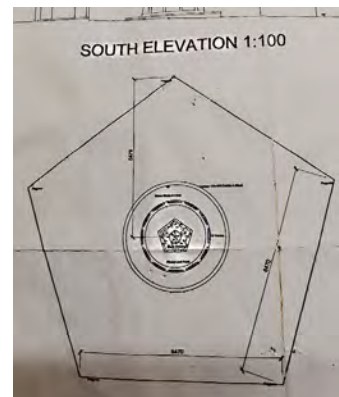
Op 30 April 2010 is die 61 MVA amptelik aangestel as die Beskermheer van die 61 Meg nagedagtenis en memorabilia deur die voormalige Hoof van die Leër, Lt Genl SZ Choke. Dit het 61 MVA in staat gestel om die gedenknaald en Lombaklok wetlik te skuif.

Waarom na die Nasionale Oorlogmuseum?

Na baie oorwegings, navrae en planne na waarheen die items geskuif moes word, het die keuse uiteindelik geval op die Nasionale Oorlogmuseum in Johannesburg. Die motivering daar agter het op die volgen-

Die Allenige Gedenknaald

Vir 'n paar jaar het die 61 Gedenknaald op sy plek in Lohathla bly staan. Die lyne is intussen oorgeneem deur die Onderhoudseenheid. Met die stigting van 61 MVA het die veterane organisasie legitimiteit verkry. In 2009 is 'n projek geloods om die name van die gesneuweldes so volledig as moontlik te kry. Die



de berus:

- Die museum skep spasie/ruimte om beide die momento's en gedenknaald sentraal te akkommodeer op plekke wat dit tot hul eer sal strek.
- Die museum is gerat vir die ontvangs en langtermyn bewaring van die items - tot in die geslagte na ons



- Die 61 MVA bly die “custodians” van die items en die museum stal dit uit op ‘n bruikleen basis.
- Oud lede se memomento's sal ook ontvang en bewaar kan word.
- Die museum skep langtermyn volhoubare en kundige bewaring.
- Koste is minimaal vs. die skep van ‘n eie poging / museum.
- Hopenlik sal ander veterane assosiasies dieselfde idee volg en help om ‘n noduspunt vir almal met ‘n bosoerlog belang onder een dak te akkommodeer.

Die 61 Gedenkmonument Kom Tuis

Die beskikbare spasie by die Ditsong Museum was beperk. Dus moes die aanvanklike Omuthiya uitleg



verander word. Dit is onderneem deur Brig Genl (Aft) Bokkie Smit. (61 Meg Bev 1986/87). Nadat hy die SANW verlaat het, het hy verder studeer in argitek tuur. Die nuwe uitleg het geensins afbreek gedoen aan die estetiese voorkoms van die Omuthiya model nie. Hy het die bouplanne ingedien en laat goedkeur. Kol (Aft) Jaap Steyn (61 Meg Bev 1997/98) het die taak van die verskuiwing aangepak. Eers moes die Gedenknaald versigtig losgebreek word van die sementblokke te LGS en daarna met groot sorg verpak word vir die tog. Voor vertrek moes die plek waar die Gedenknaald uitmekaar gehaal is, eers netjies gemaak word. Jaap het sy messelaars by Vryburg opgelaa.

Hulle moes maar stadig ry want die Gedenknaald was swaar en Jaap sou homself nooit vergewe het sou die monument iets oorkom nie. Inderdaat het die Gedenknaald effens verskuif, maar gelukkig het hy



dit gou agtergekom en reggestel. 'n Meer besorgde projekteier sou mens nie sommer kry nie. Daarna is die 670 km aangepak. Die aflaai van die Gedenknaald op sy nuwe standplaas het ook sy unieke uitdagings gehad.

Alles het egter vlot verloop en voor die hertoewydingsdatum op 12 Junie 2010 was elke ding op sy plek. Jaap het self ook ingespring en sement gemeng, gevef en afgerond. Die lui van die Lombaklok het sy voorreg geword. Hy vervul die rol sedertdien, met een uitsondering toe hy skielik moes vertrek weens dood in sy familie. Die klok is in 2010 met een slag gelui. En die vooruitsig was dat elke jaar nog 'n slag bygevoeg sou word tot by 7 slae, waarna dit 7 slae sou bly ($61 = 6 + 1 = 7$). Sedertdien maak Jaap jaarliks seker dat dit wat gevef of herstel moet word gedoen word voor die jaarlikse gedenkdiens.



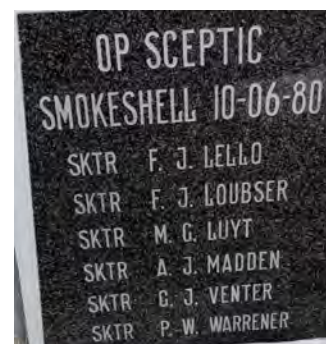
Laaste Rusplek – 12 Junie 2010

Die inwyding van die Gedenknaald het op 12 Junie 2010 plaasgevind, dertig jaar en twee dae nadat die eenheid sy eerste konvensionele krygsoperasie op die Swapo teiken genaamd “Smokeshell” geloods het.

Sowat 180 lede van die 61 Meg Vereeniging insluitende nege vorige bevelvoerders het die verrigtinge bygewoon. Onder die eregaste was Genl Constand Viljoen, die Hoof van die Leër ten tye van die Operasie. Hy het as waarnemer saam met Kmdt Dippenaar die eerste bevelvoerder en stigterslid van die eenheid die aanval op Smokeshell meegemaak. So ook was Genl Jannie Geldenhuys teenwoordig. Hy was die Bevelvoerende Generaal van die destydse SWA Gebiedsmag onder wie se bevel die operasie plaasgevind



het. Daarby was Lt Genl



Raymond Holtzhausen die destydse Inspekteur Generaal van die SA Leër en waarnemer saam met 61 Meg tydens Op Sceptic ook bevoorreg om 61 Meg (Vereeniging) weer in aksie te sien. Hierdie keer was dit om uitstekend 'n georganiseerde inhuldigingsdiens te kon meemaak. Genl-Maj (afgetree) Johan Dippenaar het as die amptelike funksionaris vir die verrigtinge opgetree.

“Om positief en besielend op te tree deur onder andere hulde te bring aan ons makkers wat hul lewens vrywilliglik opgeoffer het vir ons hul oorlewende makkers en families” was nog 'n element van sy tema. So ook was “Geloof in ons Skepper destyds die wagwoord en behoort nog steeds ons baken te wees” sy afsluitingswoorde.

Die verrigtinge is afgesluit deur 'n kransleggingsseremonie waar verskeie kranse deur Generaals Viljoen, Geldenhuys en Dippenaar asook die nege vorige bevelvoerders en verteenwoordigers van die verskillen-



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***Gedenkdien van 12 Junie 2010 - Dominee
Fanus Hansen se boodskap***

Reverend Fanus Hansen took the scripture reading from James 5:16 where it is stated: "Therefore confess our sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

In Jakobus 5:16 staan daar: "Julle moet openlik teenoor mekaar erken as julle sonde gedoen het en vir mekaar bid sodat julle gesond kan word. Die gebed van iemand wat in die regte verhouding tot God leef, het 'n kragtige uitwerking."

**

Wanneer ek en u vanoggend 61 Meg se vaandel sien wapper,
wanneer ek en u vanoggend 61 Meg se gedenknaald onthul,
wanneer ek en u vanoggend die aanval op Smokeshell basis in herinnering roep,
wanneer ek en u vanoggend terugdink aan makkers wat gesneuwel het, nie meer by ons is nie, seergekry het....

...dan dink ons dikwels
dat ons 'n stuk konflik moet hanteer.

Yes, many of us think
that to have peace within ourselves
to find an inner peace
I need to get a grip on war!
to find peace
I need to handle the conflict raging inside of me!

Anders al weer wil sê
dat ek geen vrede in myself sal vind,
as ek nie eers die lang pad na genesing vind nie....
...en die pad,
is proses op proses!
'n Proses wat op die einde moet uitloop
op 'n skuldigbevinding
dit was jý!
op 'n skuldbelydenis
mea culpa
ek is jammervergewe my!
Persoonlik dink ek dat ons sukkel met vrede
Persoonlik dink ek dat ons sukkel om vrede te vind
Persoonlik dink ek dat ons sukkel om in vrede te leef
Omdat ons so swak sien....

We don't see what we ought to see...
We don't see what we really see...
We don't see in the way others see me...



and therefore my conflict continues
and therefore the conflict continues
between people
in our marriages
in my family
at work
wherever we are....

There is an old Irish saying, an old Irish prayer:
"May the Good Lord, the mercy give us, to see ourselves, as other see us!"

As ek en u dan vandag
terugdink aan oorlog...
terugdink aan stryd...
terugdink aan leed...
terugdink aan geweld...
terugdink aan die dood van 'n geliefde...
terugdink aan bloedvergieting...
dan kan ons nogal lank sit en bespiegel,
dalk selfs by die een of ander antwoord uitkom;
man dit was sinvol – die Namibiërs getuig daarvan,
dit was aan die einde goed,
die oorgang in die land kon onderhandel word,
dit was al moontlikheid,

moes ons hande in die lug oorgee?
 ons was maar net goeie soldate
 wat die opdrag van die regering van die dag uitgevoer
 het...

Maybe we must try to reflect on ourselves
 in the words of an old Bob Dylan song...
 How many roads must a man walk down,
 before you call him a man?
 Yes how many times must a cannon ball fly,
 before they're forever banned?
 The answer my friend,
 is blowing in the wind,
 the answer is blowing in the wind.....
 How many times must a man look up,
 before he can see the sky?
 Yes how many ears must one man have,
 before he can hear people cry?
 Yes how many deaths will it take till he knows,
 that too many people have died?
 The answer my friend,
 is blowing in the wind,
 the answer is blowing in the wind....

As 'n geloofsgemeenskap,
 gaan ek en u moet begin sien,
 wat ons al lankal mis,
 wat ons al lankal ontbeer het,
 aan die een kant omdat ons te dom was,
 aan die ander kant omdat ons te blind was.
 Want kom ons weer maar eerlik –
 te dikwels verkies ek oorlog,
 bo vrede.
 Vandag is ons mense met berou
 vandag is ons mense met hartseer
 vandag is ons mense met droefheid
 vandag is ons mense met verspeelde geleenthede
 oor bloed wat vergiet is,
 oor onnodig?
 oor onherstelbaar,
 oor smart wat ontketen is....
 Om vandag vir mekaar jammer te sê;
 is om name te gee,
 is om te benoem,
 is om te vertel... wie EK regtig is!
 Om vandag vir mekaar jammer te sê;

is om op te kyk,
 is om in die oë van God te kyk
 is om 'n kruis raak te sien
 en om dan die woorde van die groot kerkhervormer
 Martin Luther
 te onthou:
 “die enigste verkeerd wat ek kan onthou,
 is sonde,
 maar sonde wat my reeds vergewe is....”
 Dan gaan ek aan,
 'n toekoms tegemoet,
 gesond,
 vergewe,
 versoen.
 Amen



2013



2014



2016



2017



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Ek staan verstom om die impak wat 61 Meg op mense se lewens gehad het. Die amper heimwee waarmee oor daai tyd gepraat word is opmerklik. Die diepe respek vir mekaar in debat en ander sienswyses, die soeke na maters, die deel van herinneringe, die trots om 'n 61'er te kon wees (selfs tattoo's word geteken meer as 30 jaar later) is alles deel van die verhaal. Jy het sommer die swagger in jou stap as jy die water van Omuthiya gedrink het en onder sy doringbome vriendskappe gesluit het.

Ons het nooit 'n moerse keuringsproses gehad en moes vlerke verdien om 'n 61'er te wees nie. Ons was "commoners forged into battle" en dit is waar ons ons onderskeidings verwerf het - waarvan wêreldwyd notisie van geneem word. Nou dat manne die geskiedenis begin skrywe en vertel, neem mense werklik eerstehands kennis van die "NDP _ Kindergarden" se dade wat die gesig van Suidelike Afrika (en die wêreld) op die vooraand van die val van die Berlynse muur permanent help verander het.

Vanaf 1978/79 het ons eenheid in elke groot oorgrens operasie die hardeneute gekraak - doodgewone NDP's onder bevel van die beste leierskap wat die army kon monster. Ons was Daar - menende aan die voerpunt waar warmgoeters die wereldvol gevlieg het en rook en dieseldampe jou neusgate gevul het. 'n Smeltkroes wat respek by mekaar geforseer het en by ons vyand en by ons bevelskader en by mede NDP's! Our sons were hero's, soos Genl Roland de Vries dit graag sê. Meer nog toe Suid Afrika in 1994 op 'n mespunt gebalanseer was, was 61 Meg die stille kohesie om 'n vreedsame oorgang te waarborg. Kom ons hou die herinneringe lewendig! Mobilitate Vincere!



A Tribute to 61 Mechanised Battalion Group

I never had the privilege of serving in 61 Mech Bn Gp, although I had a close association with the unit in many ways. This is my tribute to all who served in the Ratel ICV with 61 Mech Bn Gp; in whatever capacity, and in whichever variant; and to those who supported it in operations and in combat. Also, a tribute to those who were wounded or who paid the supreme sacrifice whilst in the unit – and to their loved ones.

61 Mech - a unit of great renown;
Combat-ready throughout its time, since gone.
By members and their loved ones revered,
By foe and their cohorts greatly feared.
Though now the combat curtain is down,
The memories are cherished and the name lives on.

61 Mech and Ratel entwined as one;
Their day now passed and their glory done;
Yet still the spirit of both is found
As memories and comradeship forever abound.

Ratel was 61 Mech's indefatigable war horse
Yet its leaders and men its driving force;
Together ruling over battlefields of yore
Which now are still and rage no more.

Be still too, remembering those who have died,
Yet also be thankful that their legacies abide.
Be of great cheer as with their loved ones we rejoice,
Their mortal being now immortal on high;
And Ratel too adds its fading voice
"Mobilitate Vincere" an immortal cry!

By: Tony Savides



MOBILITY CONQUERS

THE STORY OF 61 MECHANISED
BATTALION GROUP 1978-2005



WILLEM STEENKAMP &
HELMOED-RÖMER HEITMAN

MOBILITY CONQUERS THE STORY OF 61 MECHANISED BATTALION GROUP 1978-2005

Willem Steenkamp & Helmoed-Römer Heirman

More than two years in the writing, this book is the warts-and-all story of the birth, career and death of the South African Defence Force's 61 Mechanised Battalion Group (1979-2005), generally acknowledged as the best fighting unit in Africa in its time. 61 Mech was structured as a combined-arms unit with integral infantry, armoured and artillery components the first in Africa and arduously trained in a fast-moving mobile warfare doctrine which was not based on adapted European tactics but was specifically designed for fighting modern bush wars in the forbiddingly difficult African battle-space. It was mounted in various versions of the Ratel armoured fighting vehicle, which was locally designed for African campaigning in frequently indescribable terrain conditions, and whose cross-country mobility and heavy firepower provided the

means for applying the new doctrine. Backing it up were heavy weapons of local design such as the world-class G-5 155mm artillery piece, then the longest-ranged medium gun in the world, and its huge self-propelled wheeled version, the G-6. Led by some of the brightest officers in the Army, 61 Mech played a major role in the often hard-fought incursions into Angola between 1978 and 1988 and won all its battles, even though the South Africans were always vastly outnumbered by the armed forces of Angola with their abundant Soviet weaponry and Russian and Cuban advisors, and usually with an unfavourable air situation.

Written in an easy-to-read narrative style by two veteran military authors, the book includes many personal accounts by 61 Mech's officers and men, some of them in harrowing detail, and describes the preparations for the various operations and the on-going evolution of both the doctrine and the weaponry and equipment. But it also covers the broader context, including revealing glimpses into the hitherto almost unknown Angolan/Soviet/Cuban side of the conflict. Among other things it explains how and why the SADF became involved in the struggle against the South West African People's Organisation, pin-points for the first time the moment when the counter-insurgency campaign in SWA/Namibia became entangled with the Angolan civil war, and objectively analyses the much-debated question of whether there was ever a Battle for Cuito Cuanavale. It is also salted with short snippets of information which help to make it an entertaining read for people from anywhere in the world. Backing up the narrative are many specially drawn maps and a large number of photographs, of which most are not generic but directly related to the events in the narrative. For anyone needing a single blueprint on how to fight a successful conventional war in Africa, this is the book to read.

SPECIFICATION

Hardback, 245 x 170mm, 1152pp, 61 maps, c 400+ photos including some colour (badges & insignia)



Our Sons Were Warriors - I Will Remember Them

By Roland de Vries

EDITORS NOTE: Photographs in this article was drawn at random from the Bravo repository for illustration purposes only. The soldiers in the photos is not the same as the soldiers in the article.

I remember those who had fallen under my command and still feel the weight left in my heart and mind by the sacrifice of the wounded. Their losses resonate in my soul because they were my soldiers; I cared for them. There are many of those left with physical and psychological scars of undue sacrifice for our country. Their names unfortunately do not appear on any memorials.

On 25 August 2012, I had the honour of officiating at the memorial service of the 61 Mechanised Battalion Group Veteran's Association at the Ditsong National Museum for Military History in Johannesburg. It was a glorious sunny winter's day as those attending basked in the comfort of companionship, whilst our collective thoughts dwelled to battlefields afar. It was a moving moment for all of us present as we gathered there surrounded by the memories of 61 Mech; our recollections were amplified by the names of our fallen comrades on the memorial needle in front of us. In its 27-years of existence 61 Mech had lost 105 soldiers either in action or due to general service. Of those twenty had fallen whilst I had commanded this magnificent first-line fighting unit in 1981-82.

The memories of them as young soldiers touched me deeply once again. I shed twenty tears and a part of



my essence. Thirty years ago, to date our unit was returning from Operation Meebos in southern Angola. During the same operation, on 30 July Second Lieutenant Sarel Steyn earned a Honoris Crux Decoration for bravery when he saved a number of his comrades from a burning Ratel armoured fighting vehicle which had detonated a double land mine. He also recovered the body of Rifleman Daryl Peter Croeser from the stricken vehicle while it was being ripped apart by explosion-on-explosion. Echoing our own sadness young armour troop commander Sarel Steyn later on the same day uttered the following simple words with deep felt grief about Croeser: "He was my gunner and my orderly, he was a good soldier"! I had great sympathy for this young officer, nineteen years of age,



who had to meet death in this manner in the anonymity of Angola. These were the trends of my memories about our young leaders and their fallen brothers in those fighting days. I often recall memories of them who will never grow old. They are lucky in sense that their souls are now protected from living enemy or any other person. No one can hurt them anymore. Their lives were worth every sixty seconds of distance they had run, every soul in our defence force counted dearly. Our sons were warriors! I shed a tear for all those fallen men

Blood was not the Price for Victory – Perspective in Life

I wish to put certain issues about our soldiers who had fallen or were wounded during the South African Border War into perspective.

The purpose of any war is to create a better form of peace, is it not? Is that where the worth of dying lay? However, blood was definitely not to be the price for victory! Any South African commander in the field shouldered two consistent pressing responsibilities: The one was the mission on hand and to win at all times, as there was no alternative; the other was not to incur undue casualties. This principle was embodied in the words of Napoleon Bonaparte: "He, who allows ten men to be killed where at most two need have died, is answerable for the lives of eight men." Still the more the lives of especially those precious conscripts, who were flung into high intensity battles many a time, needed careful considering. This was especially true to the succession of external operations conducted in southern Angola through the eighties. Those restrictions, however, did not bar the taking of the calculated risk, which South Africa's operational commanders and their gallant soldiers were never afraid of doing. The balances of such conflicting consequences were usually carried out under the most demanding battle conditions. The premise therefore was thorough planning and preparation for any operation or contingency and reliance on sound leadership and sensible military doctrine.

At times plans ran askew and casualties occurred as could be expected under dire or otherwise fluid battle conditions. Many of our operational commanders therefore knew what it were too loose people in battle. The memory of those who had fallen or were wounded in battle and the thinking of what could have been for them today is forever buried in the deep recesses of any commander's mind and those of their comrades. Many a time through a restless night I think about them, our fallen and wounded soldiers. It is not an easy matter for a commander to lose people in battle. When your people are either killed or wounded in action or otherwise, it is associated with a feeling of immediate shock, tremendous loss, and deep sorrow. In the military it usually occurs under life threatening operational circumstances. The loss of a precious life or limb of those under your command has a momentous deadening effect that leaves a feeling of profound sadness. The feeling of loss is inevitably exacerbated by the thoughts of those dear loved-ones and friends who are left behind. It is a feeling not to be dwelled upon too long. There still remains a tremendous responsibility toward the other living under your command. The life-threatening circumstance has not necessarily changed. The military work must be pursued progressively, sometimes

aggressively, people must be inspired, morale must be restored, spirits recovered and emotional states uplifted. This happens during and after every battle... the Cunene...the Cuvelai...the Caiundo...the Lomba... the Chambinga...the Hube...the Cuito Cuanavale.

In comparison to our views about lives it did not seem to us as if our enemy endeared the lives of their soldiers as we did. At some stage during the battle for southeast Angola South African soldiers witnessed from a distance how the enemy executed their own wounded in the field – not the ideal best practice at hand to induce high morale I may add. Strange people they were, the enemy that is.

About Troop Carriers on Land and in the Sky - The Ratel and the Puma

We had learned a few hard lessons during operations in SWA as well as southern Angola in general: If the enemy took out one Ratel armoured fighting vehicle eight or more people would normally die. On 15 April 1982 61 Mech recovered eight bodies from a Ratel destroyed in an ambush by SWAPO near Tsintsabis during Operation Yahoo. A similar vulnerability accounted for Puma transport helicopters. On 9 August 1982 61 Mech recovered fifteen bodies from the Puma which had been shot down by SWAPO over the Mui River near Cuvelai. When 61 Mech arrived at the scene the helicopter was still burning. Manifestations of dying in such horrendous ways were always heart rendering to witness. It scarred our souls.



A Few Consequences of Dying in Battle - Dying is no Accident

• **Apprehension of War Escalation and the Loosing of Many Soldiers.** On 31 October 1988, a South African raiding force of 5 Reconnaissance Regiment, Special Forces, struck deep into central Angola near Indungo during Operation Firewood. The objective was the well defended North Front Headquarters of SWAPO. The enemy lurking in the shadows of the dense Indungo forest put up a gigantic fight. Brave young soldiers from 1 Parachute Battalion and 101 Battalion were included in the order of battle. The powers to be decided not to send any artillery with them. In lieu of artillery the strike force had to fend against heavy resistance with mere 81 mm mortars for indirect fire support. This costed them dearly. Our soldiers incurred nineteen killed and sixty four wounded – an extremely heavy price to pay for one single operation. At the same time further to the east, during Operation Modular, we were readying to obliterate FAPLA's 16th Brigade at the source of the Chambinga River during the second phase of Operation Modular. The deep Fire Wood raid caused a ripple in the ranks of FAPLA. The strike was to close for comfort. They felt the heat licking at their lifeline close to Menongue. What else could come at them so deeply they must have thought? Equally so the immense number of casualties incurred by own forces caused a South African ripple of apprehension through the senior ranks. There were sighs of relief from a' high for the more prudent military strategic and operational decisions taken later to go east flanking and not west for Cuito Cuanavale; as was so ardently sought for by the younger fiery South African commanders in the field. It was clear to us on the ground that the military and political powers to be were extremely wary of war escalation and loosing many more South Africans in



battle. Such heavy losses caused the senior generals of the SADF to take more cautious approaches to the conventional war faring in southern Angola and to limit the operational objectives.

• **Deep Felt Sorrow Came with Mourning and Measures of Closure.** On successfully completing Operation Yahoo on 25 May 1982 the community of Tsumeb and 61 Mech sombrely mourned their dead and wounded as the church bells tolled. A measure of closure was found in the close companionships and the sharing of encouraging memories by those left behind. The security forces involved and the communities of Tsumeb, Grootfontein and Otavi had suffered dearly– too many were killed and wounded for such a small community. A meditation of our Chaplain Koos Rossouw from 61 Mech was published in the Otjikoto Journal of the Tsumeb District in June of 1982. The first part read as follows, from Micah 6 verse 8: “He has showed you, O’ man what is good; and what does the Lord require of you; but to do justice, and to love kindness; and to walk humbly with your God...? Then Koos Rossouw asked, “What is the meaning of this”? Together with 61 Mech the Tsumeb community had suffered precious lives of loved ones lost,



and the shock was heartbreakingly tangible. They were Lieutenant Daantjie van der Westhuizen, his son-in-law Rifleman Hendrik Potgieter, and Bushman Tracker Jan Kouswab who died in an enemy ambush on 15 April; Mr. D.J.J. Erasmus who lost both his legs due to a SWAPO mine detonated on his farm near Tsintsabis and who succumbed to his wounds during an operation in Tsumeb Hospital; Mr. J.P. Steyn from the farm Masaus, who died instantly when his vehicle detonated a landmine on his farm; Mr. L.P.J. Fourie from the farm Ruimte, who was killed with Corporal Bester, when terrorists riddled his civilian

vehicle with AK-47 fire. This was a tragic loss to the community. In addition, the commanders and chaplains of the training and feeder units in South Africa had the honour, privilege and responsibility to bring the heart-breaking tidings of our fallen and wounded soldiers to parents, families and loved ones. Commanders like Colonel Tony Savides at 1 South African Infantry Battalion (1 SAI) in Bloemfontein had to bring many of these sorrowful messages to families at home. This was done with great dignity on behalf of the Chief of the Army to the loved ones of our fallen and wounded comrades.

• Human and Worldly Outcries Leads to Peace-making. During the ill-fated air attack by six Russian MiG-23s at Calueque on 27 June 1988 seven of the twelve South African soldiers killed were nineteen years of age; the eldest was 23-years. Questions directed at the politicians and generals were sharp, damning and less than flattering. The following quote from “The War for Africa” by Fred Bridgland provides a telling perspective of the prevailing moods:

“In South Africa it caused waves of wrath, anguish

and fear as international newspapers blazoned such headlines as: Angola War: Pretoria’s Plans Go Awry; (International Herald Tribune, 13 July 1988); Military Balance Shifts Against Pretoria, (The Times of London, 16 June 1988); 12 South Africans Die in Angola Border Clash, (Washington Post, 29 June 1988); and the nightmares of Pretoria’s generals are coming true... South African whites for the first time are starting to feel the effect of casualties in a distant war of which they are told very little, (Africa confidential, 15 July 1988). Heated questions were asked about why the SADF had allowed the enemy to make a deliberate attack on such a vital installation.”

A kind of a stalemate was reached in the war. A weary calm settled over the battle field. The magnitude of events and time had caught up with the politicians and the generals on opposing sides as they opted for a cease fire and subsequently sued for peace. What is the worth of dying in battle? No wonder that such pressures strongly exerted by the South African and international community contributed to peace-making in southern Africa by December 1988. It was about time.

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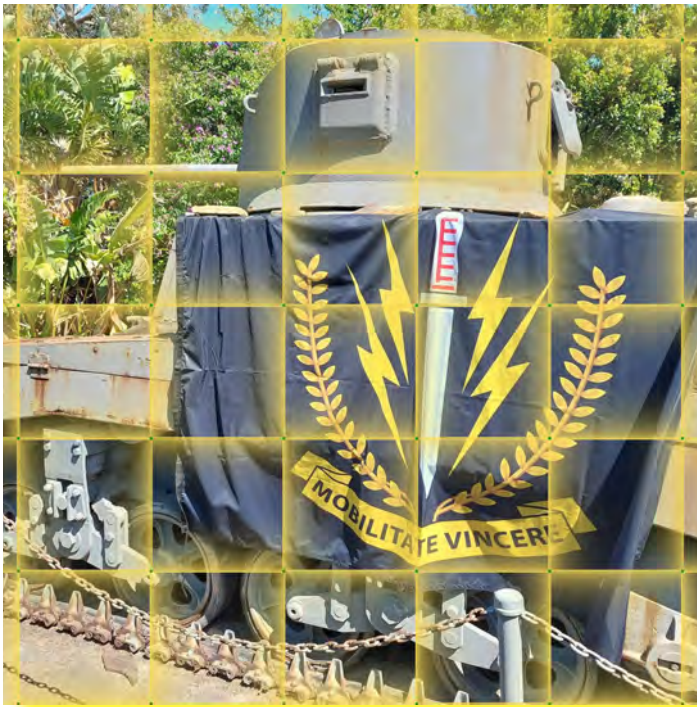
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Munga & Munga Equipe 2022

61 Meg Veterane

Buddy Projek vir 61 Meg Veterane in nood

& hulp vir HP Ferreira



WAT IS DIE MUNGA

Die Munga is 'n 'solo' bergfiets wedren oor 1130km deur die middel van Suid Afrika in die hitte van die somer. Hierdie is NIE die gemiddelde Sondag middagag 'Coffy-Ride' nie.

Dit staan bekend as "THE TOUGHEST RACE ON EARTH" en dit is.

Die Munga begin altyd om 12h00, die warmste tyd in Bloemfontein in Desember en deelnemers het 5 dae om die roete na Wellington in die Kaap te voltooi.

Daar is 5 "Race Villages" en 10 water punte op die totale roete waar deelnemers kan eet en slaap. Deelnemers mag GEEN hulp van buite ontvang nie en hul ondersteuners mag nooit met hulle in aanraking kom of bystand verleen nie. Slegs deelnemers word in die "Race Villages" toegelaat. Familie en vriende mag op 'n afstand sigbaar wees, maar NIE op die spesifieke roete nie.

Die roete volg gruis paaie, 'jeep-track, enkelspoor, sanderige sinkplaat en van die moeilikste terrein denkbaar. Daar is 'n paar gedeeltes waar deelnemers ook op teer trap, maar hierdie is bitter min.

Die hitte het vanjaar gestyg na net oor die 42 grade op sommige plekke en sterk stormwinde het die deelnemers se spoed gebreek. Hierdie roetes word nie gemerk nie en deelnemers moet dmv hul eie navigasie op koers bly. Buite hulp en/of navigasie foute kan met 'n 6 uur tyd gepenaliseer word.

WAT IS DIE MUNGA EQUIPE

Die Munga Equipe is 'n span bergfiets wedren oor 1130km en bestaan uit 5 deelnemers wat elk een skof van een na die volgende 'Race Village' ry. Die laaste 90 km vanaf Matroosberg na Wellington word deur al 15 deelnemers afgelê en hulle moet saam oor die eindstreep ry.

Die roete is as volg

Bloemfontein na Vanderkloofdam	-	229km
Vanderkloofdam na Britstown	-	179km
Britstown na Loxton	-	206km
Loxton na Sutherland	-	214km
Sutherland na Matroosberg	-	216km
Matroosberg na Wellington	-	90km

WAT IS ONS DOEL HIERMEE ?????

Pierre se Solo Munga in 2020 was die begin van iets groots, sonder dat ons dit besef het. Hy het getrap vir 61 Meg Veterane in nood. 'n Jaar later is die eerste MUNGA EQUIPE geloods en 5 deelnemers van 61 Meg het R187 000-00 ingesamel. Ongeveer 26 families kon gedurende Kerstyd gehelp word uit die fondse wat ingesamel was.

Hierdie span het bestaan uit Sarel Coetzee, Jaap Steyn, Anthony Kruger, Cordre Smith en Pierre de Jager. Vanjaar was ons mikpunt R250 000-00 en wou ons graag vir HP Ferreira help, maar ook ons mede veterane wat swaarkry.

Johan Booysen, Voorsitter van 61 MVV het my geskakel en gevra of ons nie ook as deel van ons MUNGA geld insamelings poging vir HP kon help nie. My antwoord was JA, NATUURLIK!!!!

Ek het die voorreg gehad om HP persoonlik te ontmoet, 'n dag voor ons Munga skof en uitgevind dat ek, HP en Jaco destyds al drie by dieselfde ingenieurs maatskappy, Ninham Shand, in Bloemfontein gewerk het (op verskeie geleenthede). Barries Barnard en sy vrou het ons met ope arms verwelkom en die smaaklikste ete voorgesit.



Jaap Steyn, HP Ferreira, Pierre de Jager en Jaco Prinsloo voor die wegspring



HP Ferreira regs voor

Vanjaar se deelnemers en voltooiers

Munga SOLO Hannes Basson

MUNGA 2022: Waarom? (Hannes se eie storie)

Dit het ek myself n paar keer afgevra in die opbou na die jaar se Munga 2022 MTB-wedren, iets wat bekend staan as "the toughest race on earth". En glo my as ek sê jy sal nie teleurgesteld wees nie, rof is dit rof as jy elke 24 uur n afstand van gemiddeld oor die 200 km moet voltooi op n bergfiets fiets oor n terrein wat wissel van sinkplaat en onverwagte los sand grondpaaie, jeep track roetes bestaande uit uitgespoelde spore wat min tolleransie laat vir foute veral wanner die met los sand of klippe bedek is en dan nie te praat van die ongelooflike skerp afdrande helling voor die Tankwa wat jou "skills level" tot die uiterste beproef wanneer jy oor die los klippe, sand en rotse moet kophou nie.

Ten minste 20 fietsryers het hier n stukkie grond gekoop en so-ook het ons n ryer by die Tankwa Lodge ontmoet wat se fiets nog agtergebly het nadat hy so paar ribbes daar gebreek het.

Die kroon op dit alles is die ongenaakbare weersomstandighede – n wind wat nie n begin of einde het nie en volgehou het en net nooit in jou guns waai nie, warm sonskyn geleenthede wat jou 3 waterbottels laat leeg drink binne 50km en dat dit opgevolg kan word deur koue nagtoestande

wat net nie logies sin maak nie. Om alles mooi af te rond is daar nog die los donderbuie en weerlig wat jou laat sidder **wanneer dit die aarde tref so 50m van jou af sodat die metaal "handlebar" jou skok.**

Dan praat ek nie eers van die min slaap, somer op die sement vloer in die eetsaal of op n dun **matrassie op n stoor vloer nie, dankie vir die geleentheid wat jy by n "Race Village" wel op n bed kan slaap...**

Dis hier wanneer jy moedeloos, uitgeput en broos is wanneer jy die grootsheid van die skepping besef, ook vasgevang in die mooi van sonsondergang en sonsopkoms, die skoonheid van die hemelruim en sterre in die aand.

Wanneer jou vertrouwe in die mens herstel word soos jy saam mede fietsryers die stryd aanpak en almal mekaar moed inpraat en help om die stryd te voltooi. Wanneer vrywilligers en boere op die roete regtig uit hul pad gaan en moeite doen met jou wat hulle nie eers ken nie sodat jy jou wens kan uitoefen en jou doel kan bereik.

Tydens die avontuur waar jy kan waarde toevoeg met fondinsamelings om ou weermagvriende wat nog letsels van die oorlog opgedoen het te kan help, ou weermag vriende soos 61 Meg Veterane kan opspoor, te kon aansluit net om weer die effektiwiteit van hul organiseering te ervaar en te besef waarom ons hierdie eens magtige weermag was waarmee tred gehou moes word. Dankie Pierre, Jaap en al 13 ander manne dat julle my so op kort kennisgewing aanvaar het as deel van die span.

Selfondersoek en doel vir waarom jy doen, wat jy doen is dan die sleutel tot jou deursettingsvermoë, in my geval wou ek dit opdra aan my groot weermag vriend Ampie Bredenkamp wat in Januarie 2022 oorlede is. Dan is daar n vriend wat my gevra het om saam hulle te ry. Hy het in die stikkende hitte van Munga 2019 n beroerte ervaar op die roete (temp van tot 50 C), daarna Covid-19 opgedoen en nagelaat is met n ooraktiewe skild klier en 'grave disease' gevolglik is hy medies ongeskik verklaar vir Munga 2020. Ek het ingestem onder voorwaarde dat slegs as hy dit dan kan doen, natuurlik gehoop dit motiveer hom en bespoedig die herstel proses. Dan was daar sy jonger broer wat hom moes monitor maar wat ook gepoog het om sy 3de Munga te voltooi, ek sou help met navigasie en tydhou terwyl hy strategie en boeta dophou.

Dan was daar die familie, vriende en kollegas wat nie gedink het dat ek al my varkies op hok hek nie want so-iets pak jy nie aan nadat jy 3 jaar vantevore eers begin fietsry het nie, onnodig om te noem dat ek oor 5 dae reeds 60 jaar oud sal wees nie. Maar soos my vorige bevelvoerder (Jaap Steyn) onlangs opgemerk het – sê ek mag nie, en ek doen nie maar moet **NOOIT sê ek kan nie**"

Die belangrikste is nou geskiedenis – ek het 2de laaste klaargemaak met net 4 minute oor en Danie (jonger broer) het vir die 3de keer heel laaste klaargemaak. Johan sal weer probeer en gaan dit vir seker regkry op n ander dag.

Groete

Hannes Basson

61 Meg Veteraan

(Hannes, dankie vir wat jy vir jou vriend & familie gedoen het, EN vir 61 Meg. Jy is 'n YSTER my vriend)



Hannes Basson met Pierre, George en Sarel wat die eerste skof van die Munga Equipe gery het



Rico Coetzee (Munga Equipe voltooiër) by Hannes met die voltooiing van sy MUNGA

Munga Equipe

Skof 1

Pierre de Jager, George Slabbert, Sarel Roos

Bloemfontein na Vanderkloofdam (229km)

Hierdie drie deelnemers het reeds vroeg die hitte ervaar wat gepaard gaan met die eerste skof en die sinkplaat paaie na waterpunt 1 (60km) het dinge nog moeiliker gemaak. 'n Kort stop by hierdie waterpunt was genoeg om die volgend lang seksie aan te pak na waterpunt 2 wat 111km verder was. Die bene wou kort kort kramp as gevolg van die hitte, maar die drie het gelukkig onbeplande water by verskeie punte op die roete benut. Pierre en George was in 1981 saam by Meg Leier Vleuel onder leiding van Jaap Steyn en kon hul wedervaringe van 40 jaar gelede oorvertel en daaroor terugdink.

'n Pragtige sonsondergang was te sien toe hulle die brug oor die Rietrivier bereik het. Hiervandaan was die terrein redelik rof en moes daar met versigtigheid deur strome kruis en hekke oop en toe maak. By 'n onbeplande wateroort is hulle meegedeel dat een van die Valskerm Battalion se spanlede na 36km aan 'n hartaanval beswyk het. Dit was baie slegte nuus aangesien ons en die Bats nou al sedert Januarie hegte vriende geraak het en baie idees en inligting onder mekaar uitgeruil het.



Pierre de Jager, Sarel Roos en George Slabbert by wegspring

Oppad na Waterpunt 2 was daar gedeeltes waar die terrein ons ruskans gegun het en kon ons van die langer afdraendes gebruik om verlore tyd in te haal. Waterpunt 3 was soos 'n klein oase en ons kon water aanvul en iets eet. Daarna was die weer effe opgepluk met ons en die wind reg van voor. Die blitse het oral geslaan en die reën het ons spoed gebreek. Reënjasse wat vooraf

deur 'Racepace' gemaak is en netjies in 'n 6l Meg geborduurde sakkie, gemaak deur Sarel Roos se vrou, is vining uitgepluk om teen die wind en reën te beskerm. Ons strategie was nooit om te dink aan die volle afstand nie en ons het gedurig die totate afstand opgebreek in kleiner afstande wat ons instaat gestel het om beter te fokus.



Pierre, Sarel en George so halfpad deur hulle skof na Vanderkloofdam

Die laaste gedeelte voor Vanderkloofdam was erg verspoel en van die 'jeep-track' gedeeltes vol erdvark gate en heeltemal toegegroeï. Hier moes die voorste ryer gedurig die ander in die donker teen die gevare waarsku om veilig te kon trap. Die erg verspoelde gedeelte was totaal onrybaar en was ook gevaarlik. Hierdie gedeelte is tradisioneel die moeilikste seksie op die totale roete. Hekke is oop en toe gemaak en styl bulte in die pik donker nag was nou meer algemeen.



George en Sarel

Die teerpad voor Vanderkloof was gegroet met 'n sterk wind en baie styl pad na die 'Race Village.' Ons het veilig daar aangekom en oorhandig aan Jaap, Carina en Willie.

Skof 2

Jaap Steyn, Carina Burger, Willie Steyn

Vanderkloofdam na Britstown (179km)

Carina en die Steyn broers het ietwat later vertrek as beplan, maar die nag gedeelte baie goed benut. Die styl bulte en gruis paadjies in die reservaat is gemaklik bemeester aangesien Jaap die roete goed geken het van sy vorige deelname.

Die pad na die eerste waterpunt (80km) deur Pertusville en op lang gruispaaie het goed verloop en hulle was tevrede met hul vordering. Mooi sons opkoms het hulle begroet en die pas was goed.

Hierdie gedeelte kan ontsettend warm raak en die gedeeltes af van die distrikspaaie is sanderig en moeilik begaanbaar. Carina het die 2 Steyn broers soos 'n Matrone hanteer en tyd vir slaplê was maar min. Die lang gedeelte tussen die garingbome deur is iets om te aanskou en die 3 het die eerste waterpunt bereik met nog baie energie oor. Hier kon hulle die gras benut vir bietjie uitspan en kon water aanvul en eet.

Dis altyd moeilik om hier kort te vertoef, want die hitte en wind maak jou onrustig en soms lui. Jaap en sy span was egter gedissiplineerd en het die volgende gedeelte aangepak na hul 2de waterpunt. Die terrein is baie op en af (rolling hills) en die wind kies gewoonlik om eerder in jou gesig te waai...



Jaap Steyn, Carina Burger en Willie Steyn gereed vir hulle skof

Die laaste gedeelte is altyd die moeilkste aangesien jou kragte min is en jy agterent al deurgeskaaf is. Die nuwe gedeelte na Britstown langs die treinspoor is ongemaklik, maar gelukkig van korte duur.

Die einde in Britstown was op 'n gerieflike tyd en die volgende drie, Anthony, Jaco en Moelich, kon uitsien na 'n koeler tyd aangesien hulle baie van hul rit in die aand sou aflê.



Wille Steyn, Jaap Steyn en Carina bereik Britstown



Johan, Jaco en Anthony ontvang die 'Battons' om as aflos die volgende skof te begin

Skof 3 Anthony Kruger, Jaco Prinsloo, Johan Moelich

Britstown na Loxton (206km)

Sommer met die wegspring is hierdie drie manne gedoop as die **'Wilde Honde'** en het daar weggevlug met 'n vaart. Hulle was reg vir die nag en dit wat vir hulle wag. Die eerste gedeelte was nog in warm daglig, maar die nag bring ook sy bekommernisse. Erdvarkgate sommer op 'n distrikspad en los gruis kan vir jou 'n stukkie grond laat koop. Die eerste gedeelte na hul eerste waterpunt het goed verloop en daarna was dit die stuk na die berugte Pampoenpoort waterpunt.

Na Pampoenpoort kon hul verder trap en moes eers so 'n stukkie 'singletrack' ervaar voordat hulle die laaste 5km bult vanaf Loxton na pless Jakkalsdans (Race Village) voltooi.

MUNGA 2022 , soos vertel deur Jaco

Munga MTB race van Bloemfontein na Doolhof in Wellington!! Ek het nog net gehoor van die adventure/Journey..... en op 30 November 2022 is ek deel van 61 Meg Veterane span wat poog om fondse in te samel vir HP Ferreira en ander weermag Veterane!!!



Anthony Kruger, Jaco Prinsloo en Johan Moelich bereik hul eindpunt by Jakkalsdans

Dit is 'n journey/tog/adventure wat 'n deelnemer 5 dae het om 1130km af te lê met 'n fiets..... self onderhoudend vir meeste van die tyd met 5 Race Villages waar jy water en tegniese ondersteuning ontvang met 'n bord kos!!

Ek, saam met 14 ander makkers wat op 'n stadium gestasioneer was op 61 Meg tydens diensplig of Militere kampe, of 'n vriend is van iemand wat op 61 Meg was het deelgeneem aan die Munga Bergfietswedren waar ons met bergfietsse, grondpad en oor berge, gaan afry van Bloemfontein na Kaapstad toe. Op Woensdag 30 November 2022 om 12:00 die middag, vanaf die Casino, klap die skoot en die manne trek weg. Elke ryer is op sy eie verantwoordelik vir alles wat hy sou nodig hê vir die rite waartydens geen ondersteuning van Familie of vriende toegelaat word op die "journey" nie.

Dit word beskou as een van die moeilikste uithouritte ter wêreld en ons doen dit in ondersteuning en ter herrinerig aan hulle (makkers) wat vandag swaarkry vanwee hulle betrokkenheid by Militere aktiwiteite by 61 Meg met sy Militere aktiwiteite of elders, vir sy/haar land. Hetsy dit is as gevolg van 'n besering of enige ander tekort wat maak dat hulle besig is met hulle eie persoonlikke uithourit van die lewe! Vergeleke daarmee is ons 5 dae van uithou tydens die Munga nie ter vergeleke. Ek en Moela arriveer Woensdag aand in Britstown, ontmoet ons

ander spanmaat Anthony en geniet 'n heerlike braai saam met een van die Parabats spanlede!

Ons het Donderdag middag net voor 17h00 weggetrek uit Britstown..... met net 15 blankes in die dorp (verseker deel van die 44 Afrikaanssprekendes) en omring met donker wolke en blitse na regs en na links pak ons drie die tog aan.... Met die son bokant ons koppe wat lig gooi voor ons wiele langs die wolke verby!! Hier en daar het 'n waterdruppel ons getref maar anders as dit was ons omstandighede net lekker!!



Navigasie in die nag deur Anthony en Johan

Anthony kan nie ophou praat van die lekker pannekoeke op Pampoenpoort, die 2 de waterpunt. Tussen die skerpioene, slange en Rومانne (spinnepkoppe) deur op die grondpaaie rol die fietse se wiele geduldig voort en is ons te dankbaar vir die wind wat skuins van agter kom. Ons arriveer op Pampoenpoort met die lus vir die pannekoeke so na aan my siel..... toe is daar nie!! Een van ons spanlede was moeg en het die oggend 01:00 op die fiets aan die slaap begin raak vanwee die min slaap die vorige nag.



Die "Wildevonde" is Marsgereed

Ons besluit ons gaan slaap vir uur en half! Ek lê op die laaste matras in die motorhuis waar die deelnemers inteken.... Daar kom 'n dame wat deelneem en vra of daar nie asb enige matrassie is nie want in die plek waar die deelnemers rus is al die matrassie geneem!! Ek gee haar myne want ek wou nie slaap nie net lê met my bene teen die muur. Die boer se dogter is 'n apteker student aan Potch kom na rukkies en se oom kom slaap in die huis.... Eers se ek nee maar stap saam.... Toe sy my 'n matras gee vra ek haar om my asb 3:00 te kom wakker maak..... Toe sy my wakker maak sê ek vir haar ek gaan nog net rukkies lê sy het my weer 4:00 kom wakker maak Opgespring en op die pad is ons!!

Skof 4 Bennie du Plessis, George de Beer, Alno Kroon

Loxton na Sutherland (214km)

Navigasie problem het die begin van hierdie skof ingelui, maar is gou reggestel. Op die Munga is navigasie uiters belangrik aangesien die ekstra afstand jou duur te staan kan kom. Verkeerde afdraai of roete trap kan met 6 ure beboet word en dit kan beteken dat jy nie die 'cut-off' maak nie.

Bennie, George en Alno het egter bewys dat hulle slaggereed is vir hierdie tradisionele winderige stuk van die Karoo. Sommer met die begin uit Jakkalsdans het die wind abnormal stek gewaai en het dit almal se speed gebreek. Mens besef eers tydens so 'n skof dat enige voorspelling van aankoms tyd NOOIT op die MUNGA realiseer nie.

Die pad na die eerste waterpunt, plaas Saaifontein, is redlik plat, maar die wind is lastig. By Saaifontein het Pierre reeds met sy deurrut met ondersteunings voertuig aan die plaasboer se seuns gesê dat die manne in geel nie langer as 20 minute mag vertoef nie (net grappie gemaak), maar hierdie opdrag is streng uitgevoer en die drie manne moes na 20 minute die pad vat. Dis nou eers deur Frazerburg en dan verder. Mens sien mos Frazerburg al so 20km voor jy uiteindelik daar aankom. Dit bly net 'n spikkel en 'n kerk toring vêr. Teen die afdraendes moes hulle trap want die wind was effe omgekrap en wou nie bes gee nie.



George de Beer, Bennie du Plessis en Alno Kroon reg om te vertrek na Sutherland

In Frazerburg is besluit om by die enigste motorhawe en kafee te eet en te slaap. Die wind was net te erg en die nagrit deur die 'loop' sou gevaarlik wees. Lekker gerus en om 06h00 val die manne weer in die pad. So 12km buite Frazerburg draai die roete na links in die moeilike terrein waar plaasboere nie eens meer met hul bakkies wil ry nie.

Die eerste gedeelte is nog rybaar, maar die middel seksie is groot leiklip en skerp klip wat jou bande kan sny en daar is nie 'n sagte plek om te val nie. Sand stroke wat die speed breek en 'n hele paar hekke om oop en toe te maak... ligte 'bosbus' as jy my vra.

Uit die 'loop' van ongeveer 30km is die distrikspad vol sinkplaat en rof. Die wind effe stiller as die vorige dag, maar nog in jou gesig, waar dan anders? By hulle 2 de waterpunt het die boer en sy vrou hulle water, muffins en ander eetgoed aangebied. Hulle laaste gedeelte was alles behalwe plat en hulle 3 moet diep delf teen die steil bult voor die sterrewag.



Die ongenaakbare roete wat na Frazerburg gevolg het

Dan was dit teerp pad na Sutherland, maar glad nie maklik nie. Hulle is ingewag deur 61 Meg se lede en die volgende groep het gereed gestaan vir die moeilike Tankwa skof.

Alno Kroon het getrap in die plek van Piet Stander wat ongelukkig weens ongesteldheid moes onttrek.

Alno is onlangs aangewys as een van die taaiste brandbestryders in die wêreld. Hy en twee van sy spanmaats het die aflos nommer by die "Toughest Fire-Fighter Alive" kompetisie in Saoedi-Arabië gewen. Hy het ook 'n goue medalje in 'n ander afdeling gewen. Saluut !



Alno, Bennie en George glimlag tevrede na 'n winderige en warm skof



Pierre en Jaap wens Bennie geluk na sy aankoms in Sutherland

Skof 5 Cordre Smith, Rico Coetzee, Maarten van Dalsen

Sutherland na Matroosberg (216km)

Die "Tankwa Trio", soos ons hulle gedoop het, was nou reg om te gaan. Cordre het eers die manne laat skrik deur in Sutherland regs te draai in plaas van links, net om hulle navigasie te toets. Almal het dit nou geniet na die vorige dag se probleem...

Dit was al sterk skemer toe hulle die lang opdraendes na Ouberg moes aandurf. Ouberg was erg verspoel en uiters gevaarlik in die nag, maar hulle drie het nie 'n keuse gehad om daar in die donker af te ry nie. Almal suksesvol daar af en op 'n sterk gallop oppad na Tankwa River Lodge, hul eerste waterpunt.



Die "Tankwa Trio", Maarten van Dalse, Rico Coetzee en Cordre Smith saam met Pierre en Jaap

By Cordre en Rico het so 'n maand voor die Munga reeds hierdie skof geoefen en was vertrouwd met die omstandighede. Vanaf die Lodge gaan die roete deur die Tankwa Natuur Reservaat en is die pad tipies erg sinkplaat en los sand. Alhoewel daar dan geen noemenswaardige bulte is

nie, is die grondpaaie swak en moeilik rybaar. Die drie het goed tyd opgemaak en teen 'n goeie spoed beweeg.

By die Jo-Jo tenk (ekstra onbemande waterpunt) het die Tankwa Karoo se wind hul verwelkom en was die wind erg van voor tot by Tankwa Padstal (waterpunt 2 op hul roete). Hier kon hulle eet en dinkgoed kry en so 40 minute rus voor die wind na Karoopoort angedurf word. Die wind in die Tankwa Karoo en spesifiek vanaf Padstal na Ceres, is nie 'ligte musiek' nie.

Die Tankwa Trio het egter hul staal gewys en deur die wind gebreek, die berugte "Bloubank", bult oppad na Bo-Swaarmoed en Matroosberg, getem en veilig, maar uitgeput die 'Race Village'



Maarten, Rico en Cordre is reg vir Oubergpas, Tankwa Karoo en 'Blouberg' klim na Matroosberg

Hierdie drie manne het ander deelnemers langs die roete aangespoor en 'opgetel' om hulle saam te neem teen die wind tot by Tankwa Padstal. Hulle het die wind vir hulle gebreek deur voor te ry en gesorg dat hulle veilig is. Dankie vir Maarten wat sterk was teen die wind. Manne was vol lof vir hierdie trio by Matroosberg. Welgedaan manne.



Cordre, Rico en Maarten arriveer by Matroosberg

Finale skof na Doolhof Al 15 saam
Matroosberg na Wellington (90km)



15 Munga Equipe deelnemers van 61 Meg . . . gereed vir die laaste skof na Doolhof

Die opgewondenheid was groot...BAIE GROOT. Maar eers moes ons tyd gun vir Maarten, Rico en Cordre om te rus aangesien hulle die voorlaaste skof nou net voltooi het. Hulle het so 2 ure se rus ingekry, geëet en water aangevul. Toe is 61 Meg ... REG.

15 lede van 61 Meg saam na Wellington deur Ceres en oor Bainskloofpas. Die eerste gedeelte wat hoofsaaklik afdraende met teer en gruispaaie tot in Ceres.



By Ceres Toyota is eers gestop vir n groepfoto aangesien Francois van Wyk van Ceres Toyota ons geborg het met 'n Toyota Fortuner wat ons benut het vir ons vervoer. Baie dankie daarvoor.

Van Ceres is ons af in Michellspas verby Wolseley na Bainskloofpas. Hierdie pas het stil begin maar gou begin steiler raak. Van die manne was braaf en het mekaar die stryd aangesê en gekyk wie is eerste bo, maar daar was ook 'n paar manne wat swaar getrek het teen die 13km lange bult.



George, Bennie en Jaco teen Bainskloofpas uit

Afdraende het gewag en daar is gestop net voor die pad na regs af gruis geword het met 'n effe tegniese gedeelte of twee. Bennie du Plessis het vir ons 'n stuk van Doolhof gekoop met die afkomsag. So, 61 Meg besit nou amptelik grond in die Boland. Die laaste stukkie singletrack na die eindpunt was afgehandel en al 15 het die eindstreep oorgesteek.



61 Meg se 3 spanne is goed ondersteun langs die roete, baie dankie aan almal daarvoor



15 x Tevrede deelnemers bereik die eindpunt in Doolhof, Wellington

Die 1130km vanaf Bloemfontein na Wellington afgelê in 4 dae 5ure en 45 minute.

SUPERTROTS

BEDANKINGS en MEDELYE

Pierre de Jager :

Aan al my spanmaats, julle was GREAT. Die deursettingsvermoë, kammeraderie en dissipline het ons 'n "Band of Brothers" gemaak. Julle toegewydheid en durf onder moeilike omstandighede het gewys van watter kaliber julle gemaak is. By elke waterpunt en "Race Village" is ons geloof vir ons onberispelike netheid, vriendelikheid en spangees.

Julle het 'n merk gemaak op die Munga, sy organiseerders en helpers. Die boere gemeenskap het die hoogste lof vir ons optrede en spangees tydens hierdie rit. Dankie daarvoor, dit maak my SUPERTROTS.

Aan Jaap vir sy onsettende dryf en hulp op alle fassette van hierdie rit. Sy hulp aan my met die aanmeekaarsit van iets groter as onself. Ons het hierdie Munga al in 2020 begin aanpak en ons kan met trots sê dat hierdie die grootste geld insamelings poging is en sal bly.

Maar, die uitbou van 61 Meg se beeld is net so belangrik. Die sigbaarheid van ons 'geel' trui, die plasings op sosiale media en in baie plaaslike koerante het 61 Meg een van die mees gerespekteerde Veterane Verenigings gemaak.

HARTSEER

Dit was vir ons bitter hartseer toe ons op skof 1 moes verneem dat Lammie Straus van span "Valk 2" (Valkerm Battaljon) op km 36 aan 'n hartaanval beswyk het. Ons is hegte vriende van die Valskermsodate en het ons respek en simpatie betoon deur van daar af op elke skof 'n swart armband te dra. Ons dink aan Lammie se familie en vriende in hierdie hartseer tyd.



Lammie Straus

LEDE WAT MOES ONTREK VOOR MUNGA EQUIPE

Twee van ons lede, Louis Knipe en Piet Stander moet ongelukkig voor die Munga ontrek weens 'n skouer operasie en ongesteldeheid onderskeidelik. Ons het julle twee gemis en bedank julle vir julle bereidwilligheid om te wou deelneem e nook met julle geld insamelings wat ons ontvang het. Dankie aan Alno Kroon en Johan Moeligh wat op kort kennisgewing kon instaan.

61 MVV se ONDERSTEUNING

Dankie aan 61MVV se Uitvoerende Komitee vir julle ondersteuning in ons Munga poging. Ons vertrou dat ons julle trots gemaak het en dat ons hierdie MUNGA kan uitbou na meer hoogtes in die toekoms.

ONDERSTEUNERS

Ek maak gewoonlik nie uitsonderings nie, maar vanjaar, soos alle vorige jare het Jannie Nieuwoudt weer voorgevat en die geld insameling gedruk tydens ons reis. Jannie het ook waardevolle terugvoering gegee aan die verskeie sosiale media groepe.

Gerhard van Rooyen het ons verras deur op Jakkalsdans saam met sy vriend Rob Nash.

Gerhard en Thinus Geldenhuys het ons weer ingewag by Doolhof met die nodige verversings en verstekings. Daarna het hulle ons by Rico se huis met 'n heerlike wors braai bederf.

Dankie ook aan Rico en sy vrou vir die gebruik van hul fasiliteite en hul gasvryheid.

MUNGA en MUNGA EQUIPE 2023

'n Paar van ons manne pak die Munga volgende jaar solo aan en dus is daar plek in die Mung Equipe groep. Ons gaan deffinitief van 'n keurings proses gebruik maak.

'n Paar voorbereidings byeenkomste sal ook op die kalender wees ,hou julle gesond en fiks.

Born of 61 span sal ook volgende jaar deelneem.

Stuur asseblief soveel name en kontak besonderhede aan Pierre (procon@lando.co.za / 0824155580)

Geseende Kerstyd en 'n Voorspoedige 2023 vir almal

Pierre de Jager

61 RIDERS

By: Toffie Grove



61 RIDERS is in the process of being finally registered with the Bikers' Council of South Africa as a Fraternal Motorcycle Club.

This means, for practical value, that we are officially welcome and accepted by the total Motorcycling Fraternity of South Africa. We are also then protected by this community as Brothers. Our numbers are growing since more and more 61 Members see value in the absolute PRIDE that 61 RIDERS emanate when they wear the 61 RIDERS' waistcoat.

This waistcoat is an absolute work of art when compared to any other Biking waistcoat (or any other branded piece of clothing).

This shows when we join any other group or entity for a fun ride or an organised ride to some event. This was proved true when, on 20 November a handful of 61RIDERS joined the rest of the Biking Community on the annual Hell's Angels Poppy Run.



61 Riders gathered together at Hell's Angels for the annual November Poppy Run



Members of 61 Riders paying their respects to fallen soldiers



Together with Bikers from all walks of life

We were again personally welcomed with open arms by Mr Peter Page, who is the President of the Hell's Angels in Jhb, and presidents from Crusaders as well as Mac's.

The truth is that 61 Mech is most likely represented at all levels in the Biking world by Members that also served at 61 Mech in the war years. This means that all Bikers invariably has immense respect for 61RIDERS wherever we go! To receive that amount

of respect wherever we go, is heart warming and the goodwill that comes with it, shows!



61 RIDERS at the Wreath laying of the Hell's Angels' Poppy Run...

Application Forms are available from Me at any time. Just send a mail to: toffie.grove@randparkhigh.co.za and you will receive an Application Form to become a 61RIDER. Since we are not a true club, but ride under the auspices of 61MECH, we have no Club Structures as such and a new Applicant qualifies immediately as a full Member by virtue of his serving at 61 MECH when he was a soldier. We have no PROSPECTS or APPYS like the rest of the Biking Community.

During the POPPY run on 20 November 2022 we Rode with the rest of the Biking Community to pay our respects to all Fallen Soldiers and it was Indeed a very big honour to be part if something that Great.

We go into the last part of this year with FOUR new Applications that are being processed as we speak. This bring our Total Membership number close to the 50 mark!

I would like to thank my fellow founder-members for their huge contribution throughout the past years of development.

Jan Vorster, Kelvin Luke and Eben Pretorius.....I salute you!!

I would also like to thank Johan Booysen, Chairman of 61MVA for his tremendous Contribution and hard work regarding the Registration of 61 Riders. Your hard work and endless hours is highly appreciated and Valued by Myself and the other RIDERS.

WE DO LOOK FORWARD to next year with anticipation, hopefully to see not only our numbers growing, but also the amount of pride expanding into the community that will make us more visible and more valuable to our Community.

Toffie Grové



Kobus Kemp 1 Mei 2022

Ek besoek gister 61 Meg Veterane by Voortrekker Monument. Kry ek daar 61 Meg manne daar met 'n klomp regalia wat hul ten toonstel en verkoop vir 61 MVV BUDDY FONDS. Dankie vir wat julle doen,

dit gaan nie ongesiens verby nie. Die hulp wat jul verleen aan oud 61 Meg Veterane dankie. Ek haal my hoed af julle weet Wie dit is ek gaan nie name noem nie nou laat ek iemand se naam uit. Sterkte daar vir jul almal, wees veilig! Totweersiens!





11 - 11 - 11 - 18



In the spirit of Remembrance members of 61 MVA observed Poppy Day 11 September 2022.

Op die Elfde uur van die Elfde dag van die Elfde maand 1918 het die Eerste Wêreldoorlog geëindig.

In South Africa, Remembrance Day is not a public holiday. Commemoration ceremonies are usually held on the nearest Sunday, at which the “Last Post” is played by a bugler followed by the observation of a t



As Kleynhans

Ek het vandag 13 November 2022 die voorreg gehad om 'n krans te lê by die jaarlikse gedenkdiens wat deur die Presbiteriaanse kerk in Darling aangebied is.

two-minute silence. Ceremonies to mark the event in South Africa are held at the Cenotaph in Cape Town and in Pretoria at the Voortrekker Monument cenotaph and the War Memorial at the Union Buildings. Many high schools hold Remembrance Day services to honour the past pupils who died in the two World Wars and the Border War.

Die oorlog om 'n einde te bring
Aan alle oorlog was nie gering

Die elfde uur
Die kanonnevuur
Het stil geraak

Die elfde dag
Mag teenoor mag
Maak vrede
Vir die hede

Die elfde maand
In vrede gewaand

Met die wêreld uiteen geruk
Om die dele weer aanmekaar te stik
Met miljoene lyke is die weg
plavei
Om vir die volgende oorlog te berei

©Dawid Lotter



**13 November
2022 - Anthony
Turton**

Today we pay
our respect in
Port Shepstone.

102nd National Civic Remembrance

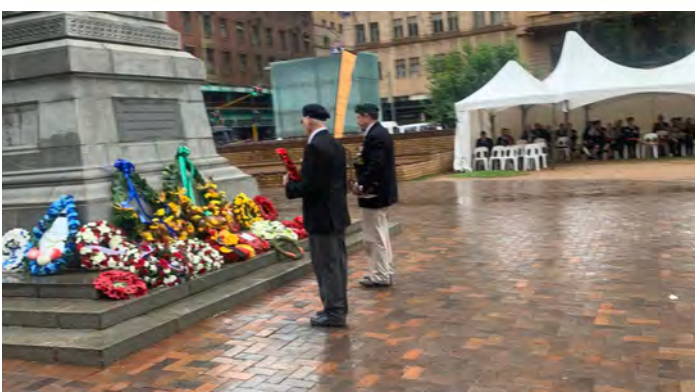
Sunday service and wreath laying

ceremony 13 November 2022

I had the honour to represent the unit today while attending the 102nd National Civic Remembrance Sunday service and wreath laying ceremony.

We will remember them! Even in the rain.

Wayne Riddell





Tolla Christoff Lombard and Lorraine Barry Martin.

Somerset West:
Marshall Smuts
Shelhole, Remem-
berings Day.



Niel Bruwer

Nathan, my son layed down this little plaque at St Charles College in honour of a special bunch of men who I have the honour to call friends. Thank you for sharing all your stories with us. We missed the war but we honour you.
Bravo Comp Platoon 2
1988



Morkel Combrink

Herdenkingsdag Duits-
land 2022



Remembrance Day Ceremony In Bloemfontein

The George Coombs Shellhole was the host for this 104th Remembrance Day ceremony held in the Film Hall at 1 Special Service Battalion, Tempe, Bloemfontein on 13th November 2022 at 11:00.

Barries Barnard laid a wreath on behalf of 61 Mech Veterans Association. Several members of Club Omuthiya attended the ceremony and their wreath was laid by Freddie Arnold and Pieter Stapelberg.

Hennie (HP) Ferreira laid a wreath on behalf of all

the Smokeshell Soldiers.

Several members from the Free State/Northern Cape MOTH's attended the event as far as Van der Bijlpark and Kimberley.

198 people attended the ceremony and the Bloemfontein Scottish Band made sure that the event was a great success. The Bugal player was responsible to play the Last post and the Reveille and did an excellent job in doing so.



Tell the Story...

The longer I spend time listening to the stories our border war veterans share about war experiences, the more convinced I am that telling the stories is vitally important.

Most adults have at least a few memories that are downright painful. On the one hand, there are those embarrassing experiences that cause us to cringe, even decades later. Then, on the other hand, there's heavier stuff, like heartbreak, loss, and regret. These memories are more than a series of facts and images—they also carry powerful emotions that feel like a punch to the gut every time we remember them.

In the case of trauma, this phenomenon is taken to the extreme. Trauma is an “unexpected event which can prove to be life-threatening to you or someone near and dear to you. Trauma could, however, also relate to any other situation in life where your normal coping mechanisms are totally overwhelmed”. (Yvonne Retief 2005). It's helpful to remember that trauma is a normal reaction to many experiences, and that the way each person handles it is unique.

People who are exposed to traumatic events have a profound need to make sense of the events and survivors of trauma sometimes benefit from professional support to help them do so. Traumatic memories are so emotionally loaded that even the smallest of reminders can be crippling. The sound of a car horn might trigger a panic attack, or a familiar smell can lead to an uncontrollable rage.

As a result, many survivors of trauma do their best to avoid these memories—who would willingly expose themselves to even more pain? The memories of a trauma can feel like a jumbled mess—an unbearable wash of images, sounds, and emotions. Unfortunately, avoidance of trauma can sometimes be more harmful than it is helpful. It might feel good in the moment, but it usually causes symptoms to be worse when they do arise.

So, what is a helpful way forward?

Telling the trauma story is one of the most effective

coping strategies for dealing with trauma-related distress. Talking about a traumatic experience helps organize memories and feelings into a more manageable and understandable ‘package’ of events. Telling the story is a significant step in the trauma recovery process no matter what array of symptoms is present.

Trauma narratives can occur spontaneously in conversation. These spontaneous events can provide relief, but may, on occasion, occur in an inappropriate setting or at an inappropriate time. Formally structured conversations with the support of someone who is trained in trauma, are typically more effective and less disruptive to ordinary life.

Trauma narratives can include verbal storytelling, participating in interviews conducted by trained trauma specialists, or the use of written descriptions. An assortment of creative techniques is also known to develop narratives such as drawing, painting, collage making, creative writing or scrapbooking.

There are many other ways that survivors can benefit from telling their stories. Their trauma reactions are better understood and consequently, better symptom management becomes possible. Isolation and withdrawal is lessened and hope for recovery is mobilized. Additionally, listeners provide much needed interaction and support with their willingness to receive the narrative. Other advantages include a fuller realization that the trauma has passed, facilitation of the grief process and an increased resolve to move forward.

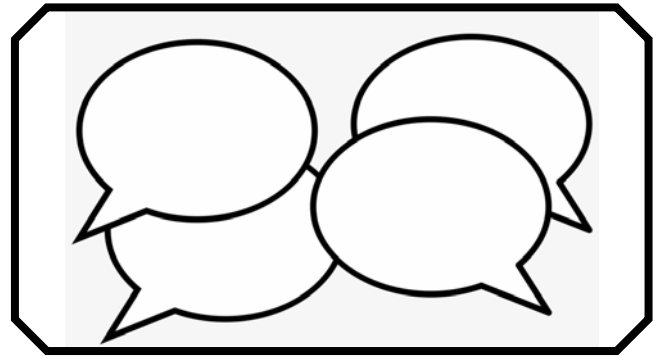
So, what's next?

So many border war veterans, and indeed veterans from around the world, talk of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD as it is commonly known. I am sensing that this has become a rather taken-for-granted diagnosis or “label” synonymous with the experiences and stories of all veterans. However, the more I listen to your stories and experiences, I do find myself wondering if it is always a fit for war veterans?

So, I'm curious - What does the term PTSD mean for you? How might it have influenced your life post-war? What has helped you to move through it? Can

you tell me a story of how trauma or PTSD has hijacked your life? Do you have a story of war trauma you might like to share in this column?

Please be in touch with me on nicky@i4cc.co.za
In our next column we will share some of your stories and also explore the concepts of moral injury, collective trauma and secondary trauma.



About Nicole Dickson, MTh (Pastoral Therapy), BA Hons (Psych)

Pastoral Theologian, Narrative Therapist, Spiritual Director, Lecturer & Facilitator)

Nicole is a narrative and pastoral therapist in private practice. She also heads up The Institute for Creative Conversation, a non-profit organization in Kempton Park, where she teaches narrative therapy to faith communities such as The Methodist Church of Southern Africa and Anglicare. She also consults at Mosaiek Gemeente and is a Spiritual Director trained through JISA.

She is currently undertaking her PhD in Pastoral Family Therapy from the University of South Africa and was part of the Angola 2022 journey back to Angola.

She can be contacted on nicky@i4cc.co.za

With gratitude,
Nicky

Ondersteun asseblief die ondersteuners van die 61 MvV

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of 0791910558

Ian Roberts – Radio Kalahari Orkes ...

In hierdie dae van konformiteit was dit verfrissend vir my om 'Spir' Bertus Venter se stories oor die dae voor Google en Politiese Korrektheid te lees. Sy eerlikheid en oningewikkelde manier van beskryf van gebeure in dieselfde Army waarin ek ook was, gee die humor 'n breë kans om deur te kom en my innig te laat smile soos ek lees. En waar daar 'n lag is staan die traan ook naby... Dankie.

Charles Smith – Die Volksblad ...

Spir Venter se boek laat herlewe die weermagstories van die Bosoorlog. Naas ratpacks, boeliebeef en briewe van die huis het hierdie stories die troepe van die ou SAW aan die lewe gehou. Dit is stories oor droogmaak, aftjop, en die spanning tussen DP's en PF's. Dit is stories wat in kroeë oor lang dope vertel is en nou die eerste keer in boekvorm verskyn het. Skink daar 'n dop op Spir. Elke troep wat in PW & Seuns afgetjop het, sal brul by die lees van sy stories.

PG 16 - Hierdie boek is nie vir kinders nie. Dit is in Army Taal geskryf.

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'n Dekade van Skouerskuur

In 61 Meg Bn Gp se dekades van Bosoorlog, Townships, Magsgereedheid en Opleiding was hegte bande gesmeë. Bande wat na meer as vier dekades net sterker geword het. Skouerskure het die instrument van bindkrag geword. Enige spier moet in oefening bly om te verhoed dat dit in onbruik verval en afsterf. Skouerskure is die gespe van die lyfband wat ons bymekaar hou. Maar belangriker nog, wat die 61 MVV laat groei. Net deur hierdie sosiale aksies by te woon en te ondersteun kan ons verseker dat die eenheid nie in vergetelheid sal verval nie.

Die 61 MVV het in 2009 sy fondasie gelê by die eerste Skouerskuur na die eenheid se sluiting vier jaar vantevore. Skouerskure het die aanduiding van die MVV se hartklop geword. En die “vitals” is sterker as ooit. Operasie Skouerskuur het deur verskillende fases van groei beweeg. Die eerste Skouerskuur was gereël deur Mike Beyl aan die Wesrand.

Aanvanklik was die ideë om die land in streke te deel met 'n formele struktuur wat die streke aktief gehou het. So het die struktuur in 2016 gelyk:

Gauteng: James Starkey - 343
KwaZulu-Natal: Anton Muller - 34
Vrystaat: Reg Walkerly - 84
Noordwes: - 50
Limpopopo: Chris Barnard - 16
Mpumalanga: Willie Cloete - 41
Noord Kaap: Adriaan van Wyk - 14
Oos Kaap: Brian James - 44
Wes Kaap: Jannie Nieuwoudt – 190
Oorkant die waters: - 13

Die formele strukture was nodig om die kultuur van Skouerskure te vestig. Maar soos enige goeie ding, het die konsep ontwikkel in iets beters, om by die omstandighede aan te pas. Alhoewel die formele strukture wat gevestig is bly voortbestaan, het die filosofie oor die wye spektrum 'n nuwe gedaante gekry. Die bedryf van Skouerskure word aangemoedig om die bestaande suksesvolle streke. Maar geografiese substreke se begrensings het verdof en skouerskure word gereël waar en soos die behoefte ontstaan.

Sedert 2021 doen 61 MVV GROOT. 'n Nasionale Skouerskuur word by die Gariëp Vakansieoord gehou. Dit het in 2022 weer plaasgevind en die beplanning

vir 2023 is alweer volstroom aan die gang. Dit word in 'n aparte hoofstuk saamgevat.

Om die geskiedenis van al die Skouerskure sedert 2009 te boekstaaf is nie haalbaar nie. Met die jare wat verbygegaan het, is ons Veterane se geheues maar kort. In hierdie artikel lig ons dus net 'n paar hoogtepunte uit. Die Skouerskure van Club Omuthiya word in 'n aparte hoofstuk gedek. Sodoende kan die waarde van gereelde skouerskure die beste beskryf word.

Die 61 MVV Skouerskure het nie net 'n heenkome geword vir die 61 Meg Veterane en hulle gesinne en vriende nie, maar ook enige ander veteraan wat hom met die kultuur van 61 MVV vereenselwig.

Wesrand 21/07/2010

Mike Beyl aan die Wesrand het die Skouerskuur tradisie begin deur die eerste 61 MVV Skouerskuur aan te bied. Dit is bygewoon deur sowat agtien 61 Meg Veterane. Sommige manne het mekaar dekades laas gesien. Ou bande is weer opgetel en nuwe bande gesmeë. Een van die 61 MVA stigterslede Gert Minnaar het spesiaal tyd in geruim om by te woon. Bravo Kompanie 1987 was verteenwoordig deur Eben Pretorius, Stelios Moraites, en Nico van Rooyen, Die Smokeshell manne was Toffie Grove, Mike Beyl en Marco Carforio. Joe Buys, Pieter Schoeman, Stefan Jacobs. Ander makkers het ook bygewoon.

Die doel was om die totaal van 42 geregistreerde veterane wat aan die Wesrand woon op te spoor en te betrek. In die daaropvolgende jare het die aantal lede meer as verdubbel.



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Skouerskuur Wesrand 16 February 2011



Skouerskuur In Londen 12 December 2015

This Skouerskuur In Londen on/ about 12 December 2015 was organised by Peter A. Dickens of the SA Legion (UK). Again the 61 Mech Veterans were there and had a great trip down memory lane with amongst others Len William from Ops Askari, Dave Mannal from Ops Modular. Dave presented his book Battle on the Lomba for sale during this event.



Tolla Christoff Lombard

Baie dankie vir almal se opkoms by ons Somerset West skouerskuur vandag. Gert Minnaar jou yster dankie vir jou reëlins. Saluut aan die 1982 manne van Ops Yahoo. Van julle het opgestaan en jul stories vertel. Baie spesiaal. Ons harte is geraak. Deon Lamprecht ook aan jou. Great boek en sterkte met die verkope.

Jan Malan ons het vandag weer na jou geluister. Jy is "a broker of faith, a dealer in hope, and a giver of love". 'n Man van jou gelyke gaan jy nie maklik vind nie. Hoofman oor tienduisend. 'n Veterane vriend duisend. 'n Man van God.

Tolla Christoff Lombard



Skouerskuur 22 September 2019 - Waterfall Durban

Sydney Oosthuizen

A couple of vets had a “skouerskuur” at Waterfall in the Durban area. And the topic of the event was Ops. Askari.

The main conversation which was led by Sgt Dave Muller and the part that the Tiffies played in the operation. I was not in Ops Askari but a little before that in Ops Dolfyn also as a tiffie Sergeant at the time. This was a great evening and we were fortunate to have Col. Gary Williams with us to fill us in to where the loggies fitted in and their tasks to provide spares, rats and other necessities to the teams up front. We were loggies, tiffies, gunners, medics all sorts were present.



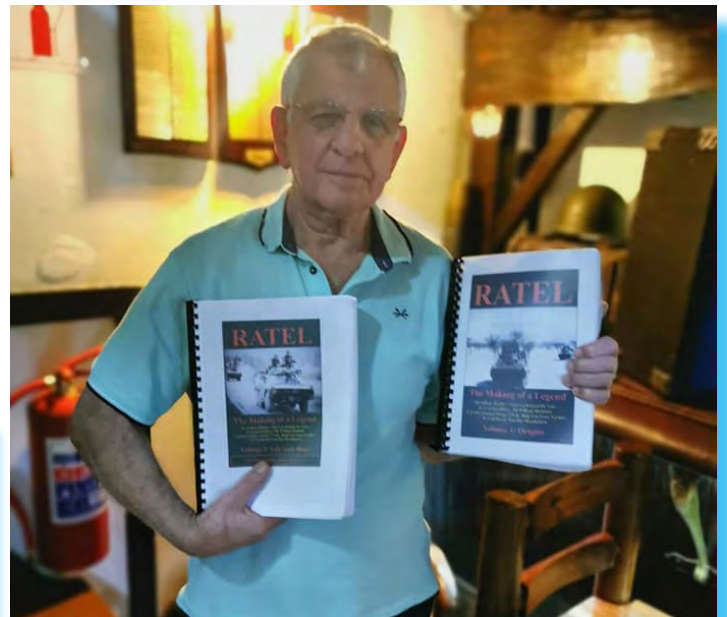
Skouerskuur 11 Maart 2020 - Muldersdrift

Hierdie Skouerskuur was beplan as onder andere 'n inligtingsessie vir die Smokeshell slagveld toer. Dit sou egter eers plaasvind in 2022 weens die Covid 19 inperkingsreëls wat kort na die Skouerskuur ingestel was.

Die Skouerskuur was gereël deur Rob Torrani en was bygewoon deur die 61 MVV Voorsitter Johan Booyesen.

Die geleentheid was hoogs interessant. Genl J Dippenaar het 'n voorligting oor Ops Sceptic waarvan die gemeganiseerde aanvalle op 10 en 11 Junie 1980 onder sy bevel plaasgevind het. Hy sou ook die toerleier na die Smokeshell slagveld wees in Junie 2020. Genl Savides het insiggewend gesels oor sy nuwe Ratel boek wat later die jaar vrygestel sou word. Tertius Zitzke het met skyfies en video materiaal die slagveld toer van 2019 toegelig. Hy het ook oorsigtelik oor die Ops Protea slagveld gerapporteer.

Dit was 'n reuse sukses.





This 61 MVA KZN Skouerskuur 23 October 2021

Niel Bruwer

We had the most amazing time with you all. Thank you to Anton Muller for making this happen. I also want to thank all the dads who brought their sons. Great young men. The future of 61 Mech. Our name will never die. Als vir die Dolk met die Weerligstrale.



Museum van die AFB Ysterplaat 26 February 2022

The SAAF Museum Satellite Ysterplaat is the second largest military aviation museum in South Africa. The Museum houses an interesting and varied collection of exhibits covering the full period of the SAAF's existence and its operational activities as well military and civil aviation in the Cape. In addition to aircraft, weapons, engines, uniforms, etc, is a small display of Royal Flying Corps memorabilia.

Jannie Nieuwoudt

Die 61 MVV Weskaap het as gaste van die Vriende van die Museum van die LMB Ysterplaat 'n Skouer-skuur in die skadu van die Shackleton 1722 gehou. Wat 'n ondervinding! Hierdie naweek was ook die gedenkgeleentheid vir die families van die gestorwenis van die Shackletonongeluk wat in 1963 in die Stettynskloofberge plaasgevind het. Ons het van hulle ontmoet en die 61 MVV lede teenwoordig het net daar in 'n kring gaan staan en binne minute die bedrag ingesamel om die helikopterrit te betaal. Dit het hulle by die crashsite uitbring om hul laaste eer aan hul geliefdes daar te bring. Jasper Cloete het ook die helikopter gereël en teen afslag beding en John Wilson is verantwoordelik vir al die reëlings. Wat 'n klomp "klas" mense....ek is bitter trots om onder julle te tel. Op die fotos is daar ook 'n jong pilot in wording en hy gaan Maandag baie stories hê.



Club Omuthiya - Tempe - Bloemfontein

Club Omuthiya - The Conventional Warfare Capital. It deserves a full length supplement dedicated to Club Omuthiya. Read it in the next 61 MVA Quarterly Journal (March 2023 edition).

KENNISGEWING!!
"SKOUERSKUUR"
Donderdag 04 Augustus 2022



Klub Omuthiya



"SKOUERSKUUR"
1SDB, Tempe
"Bring & Braai"
Donderdag: 04 Aug 2022
@ 18:00

Nota: Onthou asb u ys!
Bring asb 'n Veteraan saam!



Oud RSM H.G. Smit het die Vaandel aan Klub Omuthiya bemaak in sy testament. Reg Walkerley het dit in ontvangs geneem op 04 November 2021



Eastern Cape - Port Elizabeth

The Eastern Cape MVA branch proved to be very active. Die Oosgrens is beveilig.



Highlights

30 October 2021



3 December 2021

3rd of Dec 2021 was our last 61 Mech Veterans Skouerskuur of the year that was held. A Huge turnout from all the Veterans who was able to join us.. A special thank you to the Maritime Club which was a great place to be. Veterans and Friends of 61 Mech who was there was 32 Battalion, SA Marines, 101 Battlion, Sapper Veterans, Moths, SA Navy Veterans Associations. Thank you all that was there....Salute to you Brothers And Sisters....



7 January 2022

On 7th Jan 2022 at the Maritime Club Port Elizabeth Brian James and Danielle James who came to visit us from the UK were honoured. Brian James (Ops Smokeshell) was the first to start the 61 Mechanised Battalion Veterans Group in Port Elizabeth a few years ago. The 61 Veterans Brotherhood has grown which has been very successful with the help from Brian. Brian shared some interesting stories on the Veterans parades in the UK which he attended wearing the 61 Mech uniform. It was a brilliant evening spending time with Brian.... Salute to you Brother....



29 April 2022



3 September 2022



3 December 2022

The last Skouerskuur for 2022 hosted by the Maritime Club and the Due North Rum Club. Deon Muller Wat "n heerlike onvergeetlike dag saam met die ysters in PE gehad. My eerste skouerskuur hier. Ek bly in Graaff Reinet in die middel van die Groot Karoo en afgery om die ysters te kom ontmoet na ek al maande met hulle op. whatsapp is. Opgestaan by huis en my 1 SAI sakkie gepak en gery. Maritime Klub dankie vir julle gasvryheid. Louis, Eugene, Kurt, Leon en soveel. ander . Saluut tot weersiens.



Skouerskuur (Translate as Shoulder Rubbing).

Nasionale Skouerskuur Gariep 2021

Deur: Manie van Eeden



Mei gehou

Die eerste Skouerskuur het na wat veneem word plaasgevind aan die Wesrand waar Mike Beyl die inisiatief geneem het. Van daar het menigte skouerskure gevolge en die idee het van daar af pos gevat deur die land in so 'n mate dat streek koördineerders aangestel is om die inisiatief verder in hul streke te vat. So is groot dele van die land vandag aktief betrokke by skouerskure, selfs oorsee vind dit plaas. Later het slagveld toere begin wat in ander rubrieke gedek sal word.

Vroeg in 2021 het die behoefte ontstaan tussen lede asook ondersteuners van 61 MVV om 'n Nasionale skouerskuur van stapel te stuur. Die dryfveer was dat lede regoor die land via verskillende sosiale media platforms met mekaar kommunikeer en mekaar nog nooit van aangesig tot aangesig ontmoet het nie.

Die enigste geleentheid wat daar was, was die jaarlikse Gedenkdienste en parade wat gedurende Augustus van elke jaar by die Ditsong Nasionale Oorlog Museum in Johannesburg gehou word. Alhoewel dit een

van die vereniging se hoogste punte op ons jaarlikse kalender is, is dit formeel en voldoen nie aan die behoefte om met ou en nuwe kennisse skouer te skuur nie.

Die norm was en is nogsteeds dat Skouerskure in streke gehou word, wat wel geslaagd en goed ondersteun word. Maar met die gebruik



kom lede oor die land heen nie bymekaar uit nie,

Daar is 'n forum saamgestel vir Skouerskuur verteenwoordigers in die streke, onderleiding van die Nasionale Koördineerder, nl. Janie Niewoudt wat ook lid is van 61 MVV Exco.

Die inisiatief is op 61 se Facebook blad asook op ander platforms vir die lede voorgehou, en die reaksie was baie positief ontvang. Die besluit is geneem dat die naweek vroeg in

sal word, Daar is besluit op Gariep omrede dit redelik sentraal geleë is vir almal.

'n WhatsApp groep is in die lewe geroep om kommunikasie tussen belangstellendes te vergemaklik. Lede wat die naweek wou bywoon kon dan self hul besprekings by Gariep Aventura Oord maak. Die naweek is grotendeel selfsorg en elkeen bring sy eie ete en drankie. Lede kon self besluit of hulle in Chalet's wil tuisgaan en of hulle wil kampeer, hetsy met woonwaens, Boswa's of in tente. Die meeste het verskies om te kampeer. Dit is ook waar die grootste gedeelte van die program sou plaasvind.

Die WhatsApp groep by name Gariep 21 het vining vlam gevat en deelname het daagliks gegroei. Lede het met ywer deelgeneem aan



gesprekke, beplanning en eie aan 61 was humor vinnig deel van die elke dag kommunikasie. Lede het begin draaksteek met mekaar, alhoewel baie mekaar nog nie ontmoet het nie. Die humor het die platform



geskep om ligtelik te kommunikeer en het die gees aangewakker om uit te sien na ons eerste Nasionale Skouerskuur.

Lede wat die naweek wou bywoon kon dan self hul besprekings by Gariep Aventura Oord maak. Die naweek is grotendeel selfsorg en elkeen bring sy eie ete en drank. Borge tussen die lede het na vore getree wat onder andere 'n skaap geskenk het vir die braai Saterdag aand. Ander het weer hout en ander voorgestel. Vir ontbyte het die groepe onder mekaar ooreengekom vir ontbyt en wie bring wat. Lede in verskillende streke het hul eie logistiek bespreek rakende saamry of mekaar ontmoet by sekere punte net om die lekker gees aan te



wakker. Sommiges het reeds vroeër die week van hul bestemmings vertrek en sommer 'n kuier trip daarvan gemaak. Heel party lede was reeds die Donderdag al bby Gariep het hulle self reeds ingeburger.

Heelwat lede het ook as deel van 61 Riders met hul motorfietse van oral oor die pad aangedurf met motorfiets gelaai met kamp toerusting en ander net wat nodig is vir chalet



verblyf. Vrydag was D-Dag en lede het van hynde en verre begin opdaag. Kampplekke is ingerig en chalet's is betrek. en hier skop Gariep21 af.

Nadat die akkomodasie in plek was het die makkers begin rond-



swerf om te groet, nuwe vriende te ontmoet. Vir die wat mekaar so op die WA groep bietjie "aangespreek" het kon mekaar nou in lewendelike ontmoet en die skerts het net aangehou en lekker lag was aan die orde van die dag. Daar is onmiddelik nuwe vriendskappe en bande gevorm. Manne het mekaar omhels, gedruk en plek plek het die trane vry geloop of vlak gesit, dit was baie spesiaal, want ons mag mos, ons is voëls van eenderse vere. 'n Wonder-



like ontspanne atmosfeer het in die lug gehang en hierdie het reed toe al beloof om 'n groot sukses naweek te wees.

Makkers het oor en weer gaan geselsies aanknoop, uitbundige lag en rumoer was oral te bespeur. Vure is sommer al vroeg aan gestee net

om die gees nog meer aan te wakker. Manne het gestaan met glasies in die hand en die tafel was gedek vir lekker braai en kuier die aand. Die groep was bevoorreg gewees dat daar ook heelwat seuns, dogters en wederselwes saam met ons daar was.



was. 'n Kamp Kommandant (kamp komediant) is aangestel om die program te bestuur en 'n komitee wat 'n ogie sou hou om belhammels te laat boet vir hul sondes later die naweek.

Teen sononder was almal ingeburger en oral het die vure hoog gebrand. Die gelag en gesels van nou nuwe en ou vriende het die aand stilte verswelg. 'n groot "bonfire" is aan mekaar geslaan van geborgde hout en manne het beweeg tussen die vure om mekaar beter te leer ken. Die gesprekke was nie noodwendig ligtelik nie en baie dieper kante is ook bespreek. Na laataand kuier en braai is almal na



hul onderskeie gate om uit te rus vir Saterdag se aktiwiteite.

Saterdag het aangebreek en die manne was vroeg al besig om die gasbraaiers staan te maak vir lekker kamp ontbyt, chalet bewoners het ook aangesluit by die kampers. Alhoewel daar 'n program was, was dit so getruktureerd dat daar oor genoeg tyd deur die dag is om elke makker geleentheid te gee om te kuier en hul eie ding te doen na eie gelang. Tog was daar darem so hier en daar 'n item of wat, wat belangrik was vir makkers om by te woon. Natuurlik is daaglik afgeskop met gesamentlike skriflesing en gebed. En toe kom almal se vrese waar.



2,4km moet in enige vorm gedoen word, hetsy jy loop, draf, hardloop, kruip of wat ook al. sommige motorfiets ryers het sinoniem met 61 Mech gemobiliseer en met motorfiets die afstand afgelê. Daar was ook natuurlik 'n waterpunt op die roete wat Old Brown sherry die water was, net om die oggend koue te ver-

dryf. Geen verpligting is op iemand geplaas om albei te doen nie. Die 2,4 km is voorafgegaan met natuurlik 'n streng "militêre parade" waar AAANDAG!!!!, OOOOP ORDE MARS!!!! ens. Van toepassing was en natuurlik voorste posisie af vir sowat tien gyppo opstote, vir die wat kon.



Na die 2,4 km het almal teruggekeer en die res van die dag op hul eie tyd en teiken geniet. Groepies het damwal toe gery en lekker daar gekuier en is toe later berg op waar verder gekuier en gesels is en sommer 'n glasie uitsoek wyn daar geniet het. Daar was ook 'n stalletjie beskikbaar waar lede 61 MVV groot verskeidenheid items kon aanskaf.

'n Paar makkers het besluit om bietjie hul 4x4 vaardighede te gaan opskerp en bietjie stof te maak.



Die aand het beloop om lekker sentrale kampvuur kuier te geniet met heelwat aktiwiteite. Die vuur vir die skaapbraai is al vroeg brand gemaak en die braaiers en vrinne het begin om die skaap te braai. Hier en daar was nog 'n vuurtjie waar manne sommer iets ligs gebraai het vir 'n

aptytwekker. Teen donker was almal in groep bymekaar vir ete en in afwagting vir die aand se program, was die volgende ingesluit het, boetesessie en veiling.



Die boete sessie was soos verwag prettig en heelwat boetes is uitgedeel. Die straf was 'n sluk van een of ander obskure mampoer wat hoogs vlambaar is en jou na jou asem laat snak. Dit was nie verpligtend nie. Na die kaskenades is besluit om die seuns wat daar was erkenning te gee. Hulle is immers die pad vorentoe vir die vereniging. Aan hulle is 'n plakaat oorhandig met al 61 se arsenaal voetue en ander klein embleme.

Toe is dit tyd vir die groot veiling wat alles ten bate van die "Buddy-





fonds” is. Die veilig was ook vooraf oopgestel op die 61 Facebook blad. Daar was ‘n baie groot verskeidenheid ietems op die veilings lys. Radio beheerde Ratel voertuie, hand gemaakte items, skenkings van lede en selfs jag pakette vir die jagters onder ons en vele ander.

Die afslaer het sy pligte opgeneem en daar is wild en wakker “ge-bie”. Lede het hand diep in die sake gestee en mekaar goed opgejaag om die items te bekom. Sommige lede het die items wat hulle bekom het weer op die tafel geplaas vir verdere opveiling. Sommige lede het ook donasies gemaak. Binne ‘n uur is nagenoeg R120 000 ingesamel vir die “buddy fonds” – ‘n ongelooflike prestasie wat weer bewys het da tons omgee en geen 61 lid agter gelaat word nie.



Die res van die aand is gewy aan lekker kuier om die vure tussen nou nuwe vriende. Stories is uit geruil, humoristies en seer. Almal het vry gevoel om sy hart uit te praat en sy storie te vertel. Later is almal op eie tyd na hul gate.

Sondag oggend was die aaklige klanke van tentpale wat val oral gehoor. Makkers is besig om aft e slaan en op te pak. Later het almal weer

by mekaar gekom vir skriflesing en gebed en bedankings. So het elkeen op eie tyd gegroet, gepak en terug gekeer nah ul betemmings

NABETRAGTING

Sowat +- 60 lede het die vuurdoop Nasionale Skouerskuur saam hulle geliefdes of alleen bygewoon. Elkeen het met ‘n vol hart en nuwe vriende en ervarings daar weg. Die lede se terugvoer was baie positief. Nuwe vriende is genmaak, ou vriendskappe is weer afgestof en hernu. Groot respek is getoon en verkry vir almal, so ook die wat die harde stryde moes stry. Seuns kon nou uit die ware “perd se bek” hoor wat gebeur het, so ook die vrouens en metgeselle. Seuns is terug huistoe na ‘n naweek tussen die 61 helde as jong mans met ‘n heel ander oënskou en respek van hul vaders en die se makkers.

Die groot doelwit van 61 MVV is om ons kinders en families deel te maak van die 61 familie. Terugvoering van die naweek was oorheersend positief en almal het beloof om beslis die volgende jaar weer by te woon en sommer nog nuwe makkers te betrek.

Opmerkings soos onder andere die volgende is oral oor gehoor:

“Wat 61 MVV vir my gedoen het, dit het my ‘n huis gegee, ‘n plek as veteran wat ek my eie kan noem, ‘n plek waar ek met eer en integriteit en waardigheid kan sê date k my land en mense gedien het waneer nodig en is ‘n oomblik van gesond word, rekonsiliasie, ‘n oomblik van herbou en rekonstruktueer. Elkeen het ‘n storie, emosie en eie ervaring. Almal het gedien, maak nie saak in watter hoedanigheid nie. Ons verwelkom almal by ons hetsy as lede of as ondersteuners.



61 MECH VETERAN FAMILY WEEKEND AT GARIEP DAM

06 - 08 May 2022



Waarskuwings Orders

Wie: Alle 61 Meg Veterane, Vriende en ons gesinne.
Wat, Waar, Wanneer : 61MVV Landwye Skouerskuur
en Gesinsnaweek Gariep 6 tot 8 Mei 2022

Waarom: Omdat dit baie nodig is

Wat daarna: Gaan huistoe met mooi herinnering en
dankbare harte dat jy deel van so n groep kan wees.

Wat doen ons en hoe:

Kampkommandat: Sarel Coetzee

Tugkomitee: Jasper Cloete

Niel Bruwer

Hennie Strauss

Kampregter: Cassie Christie

Sandmodelle: Anthony Poulton

Veiling: Jaap Steyn

Veteranesake: Johan Booysen

61 Winkel: Kevin West

Waterpunte: Mike Beyl

Seremonies: Jaap Steyn

Stoepstories en Kampvuur: Jacques de Wet

Program:

Vrydag 6 Mei 2022

14h00 - Arriveer en Kampopslaan...Rondomverded-
iging en lyne

17h30 - Amptelike verwelkoming Ordergroep olv



Johan Booysen

17h45 - Kuier om Kampvure en Skouerskuur. Elkeen sorg vir eie ete.

Saterdag 7 Mei 2022

08h30 - Bidparade en littelosmaak olv Kampkommandant

08h45 - 2,4 Km ry, stap, draf, hardloop of saamlag. Waterpunt Mike Beyl

09h15 - 11h00 VTB

11h00 - Veteranesake olv Johan Booysen en Exco.

Terugvoering oor projekte en algemene groepsbespreking oor behoeftes van lede, verwagtinge en die pad vorentoe.

12h00 - VTB

16h00 - Aanmeld vir seremonie by damwal, marsorders en vertrek.



16h30 - "Sunset Call" ,strooi van Poppies en heildronk op gestorwe makkers Olv Jaap Steyn.

17h30 - Kampvure brand, Saamkuier en Braai, 61 om die Kampvure olv Jacques de Wet.

20h00 - Kamphof, Prysuitdeling, Veiling olv Kampkommandant, Johan Booysen, Jaap Steyn, Cassie Christie en Tugkomitee.

Kuier tot laat.

Sondag 8 Mei 2022

8h30 - Oggendsinjal en Bidparade olv Kampkommandant

9h00 - Groet en vertrek op eie tyd, eie bevel en eie teiken.

Die NawEEK

Die 2022 naweek van die 61 MVV Nasionale Skouerskuur 6 tot 8 Mei 2022 by Aventura Gariepdam het sommer van die eerste tree groot belangstelling geniet. Die reuse sukses van die 2021 naweek verlede jaar het enige veteraan wat nog twyfel gehad het oor



hierdie jaar se bywoning se twyfel laat verdwyn. Die woord is deur die bywonende lede van 2021 wyd versprei en die foto's en stories wat daarna op die 61 MVV FB blad verskyn het, het die vure aangesteek by ander lede om die naweek van 2022 by te woon.

Die kommunikasie netwerk is steeds deur die FB blad asook verskeie Whatsapp groepe gehandhaaf. Die oorspronklike Gariep groep is herbenaam na “Die Bittereinders” toe. Hierdie groep het gegroei en is baie aktief en lede gesels daaglik, hetsy ernstige of ligtelike stories. Dit is net weereens 'n bewys van die belangrikheid van Skouerskure om die 61 Meg naam voort te dra die toekoms in. Uit die reaksie vanaf die verskillende platforms het 2022 beloof om 2021 se byeenkoms te oortref. Die naweek is deur meer as honderd lede met hul vroue en kinders bygewoon, wat opsigself 'n groot mylpaal vir hierdie gesogte Veterane Vereniging is.



die kampplekke is ook gou gevul met baie nuwe gesigte. Van die 61 Riders het ook hul opwagting gemaak en hul tente staan gemaak.



Soos die vorige jaar het klein groepe van reg oor die land begin groepeer om saam die tog aan te pak Gariep toe. Dit maak die reis meer beskikbaar asook korter met al die gesels in die voertuie. Party lede het reeds van Donderdag hulself tuis gemaak by die oord. Teen Vrydag het die massas begin opdaag uit alle rigtings. Baie het uitgewyk na chalets, maar

Soos wat lede arriveer het die gegroet en kuier som- mer vinnig begin momentum kry. Dit was reeds vroeg duidelik dat baie van die ouens hul metgeselle saam gebring het hierdie jaar. Dit is 'n groot oorwinning met betrekking tot ons doelwit om ons geliefdes en kinders deel te maak van die 61 Meg Familie.

Teen laat middag het die vure begin brand en daar is in groepies lekker gelag en geskerts. Van al die “dreigement” deur die jaar om sekere lede van die damwal af te gaan gooi het ook weinig gekom. Die chalet bewoners het by die kamers aangesluit en die groot kuier het begin. Die kuier is vooraf gegaan som- mer met 'n boetesessie wat vinnig in sy spore gestuit is. Die kamp komediant het probeer om die orde reël- ings vir die naweek te verduidelik, maar selfs dit het gesneuwel. Die vriende wil nou tyd opvang, lek- ker kuier en hul vrouens aan die lede en ander vroues voorstel, so ook die kinders wat daar was.



Dit was opvallend hoe gemaklik die dames ingeskaal het met ander dames asook die hele groep. Dit het 'n familie atmosfeer geskep, so eie aan 61. Die vure brand hoog en die park word gevul met 'n drusing van lag en gesels. Lede loop rond van vuur tot vuur en knoop geselsies aan. Daar is gebraai, potjies gemaak en Jandre daag op met sakke vol baie lekker biltong wat hy vrylik uitdeel, daar was oorgenoeg vir almal. Die 61 familie kuier baie lekker saam, hoe later hoe kwater. Daar was groepe wat teen twee uur die oggend nog op en wakker was en ek glo hulle het sommer 'n tweede rondte ook gebraai.....waarom dan nie? Daar is 40 jaar en langer se staaltjies wat vertel en gedeel moes word, asook heelwat skouers wat verleen word vir dié wat iets meer ernstigs op die hart het.

Die weer voorspelling het reën aangedui vir die naweek. Daar was reeds Vrydag aand 'n geniepsige koue wind wat gewaai het. Saterdag oggend was almal vroeg en vrolik uit die vere. Die kampers was vroeg aan die gang en vir die laatslapers was daar nie veel hoop nie. Gasbraaiers is aangesteek en die reuk van ontbyt het die lug gevul. Die chalet bewoners..... upperclass - het hul ontbyt in luuksheid geniet. Later die oggend het almal by die kamp area bymekaar gekom. Dit het wel vroegoggend so effe begin reën en dit was maar koelerig.

Die kamp komediant het die groep by bymekaar geroep om die orders van die dag uit te roep. Die groep het verkies om nie te veel reëlins vir die dag te hê nie en dat die tyd beter gebruik kan word om te kuier. Dus het ons by die basiese beginsels van laas jaar se kuier gehou.



Natuurlik was daar weereens baie aandenkings en klere aangekoop wat ons 61 Meg fondse 'n stewige hupstoot gegee het.

Die eerste was natuurlik die 2,4 km wat voorafgegaan is deur gebed. Dit het beslis die aandag van ander kampers getrek. Na gebed het Samajoor Jacques de Wet met bulderende RSM stem die manne bymekaar gemaak, tot groot vermaak van vreemdelinge wat in groepies saamgedrom het om hierdie petalje gade te slaan. Die light duties het eenkant gestaan en Samajoor het hulle beveel om te gaan swaai op die swaaieteryl G1K1 lede besig is met parade.

Die peloton is opgevorm en en word op aandag gebring, oop orde mars.....regs rig.....party weet nie waar links of regs is nie en arms word gou tot regstel geroep. Die volgende bevel word gebulder....vorentoe af.....dis tyd vir 10 push-ups. Na die tien gyppo opstote is die groep voort om die 2,4 km af te lê. Weereens kon jy dit op eie tyd, eie teiken voltooi. Daar was natuurlik ook weer 'n "water punt" soos voorheen.

Daar was die jaar ook 'n paar fancy dressers onder ons.

Die weer het begin saampak en dit was duidelik dat die reën op ons is. Lede en families het begin skuiling soek in chalets en of onder boswaens se tente. Die reën wou egter nie wyk nie en het later hard geval. Almal het geduldig voortgekuier in hul eie neste tot die reën effe bedaar het.

Party het geslaap en toe is die groepe na die damwal wat Poppie blommetjies in die dam gestrooi het ter herdenking van ons makkers wat ons ontval het. 'n Paar gevleulde woorde is gevoer en met agtergrond



musiek is die poppie blomme gestrooi. 'n Spesiale oomblik is ook aan Jaco en Ariël gewy. Daar is nog geruime tyd op die wal gekuier voor die lede terug is na die oord toe.

Soos voorheen was 'n skaapbraai en veiling aan die orde van die dag. Weens die reën is groepies gedwing na hul tente, boswaens en chalets. Vir braai was daar nie werklik ruimte nie maar dit het wel gebeur. Ongelukkig is die samesyn so effe in die wiele gery, maar nietemin het baie gaan kuier by die chalet bewoners en is tot laat aand gekuier en nuwe vriendskappe gesmee. Die veiling het wel op 'n manier via Whatsapp gebeur en goeie fondse is ge-in.

Sondag oggend was weer nie die lekkerste tyd van die naweek nie, want daar moet gegroet word en die geluid van tentpale wat val is nie wat ons graag wil hoor nie. Groep het op hul eie ontbyt geniet voordat almal weer by die kampterrein by mekaar gekom het vir oggend Godsdienste en paar bedankings. Die Nasionale sameroeper van die Skouerskure is bekroon met 'n cammo 61 pet uit dank vir al sy reëlins, hy was baie trots want cammo is vir hom baie spesiaal.



Nabetragting

Die naweek was weereens een reuse sukses. Die opkoms was groot en vir die volgende jaar droom ons groter. Versprei die woord. Bring vir vroulied, kinders, buurvrou en ouma en oupa saam. Ons moet almal betrokke raak om hierdie unieke vereniging en familie uit te bou.

Terugvoering van die dames wat daar was is dat hulle nie 'n Gariep in die toekoms sal mis nie, so ook die kinders. Die lede self is nou baie nader aan mekaar en

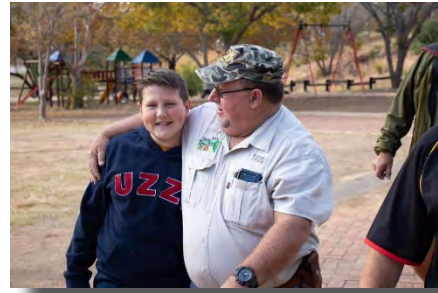
so baie nuwe vriendskappe is gesmee.

Ons sien uit om die bywoning volgende jaar te verdubbel.

Lief en Leed

Twee van ons geliefde broers wat 2021 die skouer-skuur bygewoon het, het ons met groot hartseer vir die lede ontval. Die naweek word dan opgedra aan Ariël Hugo en Jaco Olivier. Twee baie geliefde broers wat diep spore in 61 getrap het asook in ons harte. Rus in vrede makkers, julle word erg gemis.







61 MVA
Reaching Out
Reik Uit

*Om uit te reik
Is om aan te raak
Om uit te reik
Is om 'n verskil te maak*

*Reaching out to the Russian Veterans
Operation Bratstvo – An Epic Adventure In Russia 2014*

Maxim Glakow invited to West Rand Skouerskuur Oktober 2015

We Reach Out to Gareth Rutherford 2017

Ons Reik Uit Na Tannie Lorna Loubser 2021

Ons Reik Uit Na Oom Maritz Cronje 2022



Reaching out to the Russian Veterans

Operation Bratstvo – An Epic Adventure In Russia June 2014

General Roland de Vries



“We did it”...These were the words uttered in exhilaration by Maxim Gladkov when he met with a few South African military veterans at the Sokolniki Holiday Inn in Moscow. Many of these veterans were accompanied by their wives. By Maxim’s side was Russian Angolan Veteran Igor Ignatovich. Both of them have become close friends of the South Africans in attendance. All of this had happened through the internet. The moment was enthralling and almost surreal!

Operation Bratstvo...Brotherhood... this was the name coined by Mike Beyl for our next operation, albeit not a traditional military one. The plan by our small group to meet with our Russian friends from the “Union of Military Veterans of Angola” had come together! I thought by myself that the Dear Lord works in strange ways. That He showed us through this simple act of communion that we were and still are after all human and dependent on each other...that there truly exists a common bond of interdependence and mutual interests amongst soldiers, perhaps more so if they had been former foes. This strong kinship had been formed by the individuals themselves from South Africa and Russia alike. This was evident in the simple joy of fellowship radiating from our group when we met with our two Russian

friends on Russian soil.

After all this was an unofficial visit brought about by the individuals themselves to talk about the Angolan conflict and South African Border War way back when. This particular bush war had lasted from 1966 until 1989. The mission was to transcend boundaries... to be serious about our fellowship, but to have fun as well...to strengthen the kinship already established, share our memories as former foes and to remember our fallen from the days of war!

Our epic journey took us from our respective home locations in South Africa, the UK, Middle East and Australia to Moscow. Then onwards along the Volga River on our Russian cruise ship Nikolai Chernyshevsky to St Petersburg. A grand old city in western Russia previously known as Leningrad. The first four days that were hosted by our Russian friends in Moscow was a delight and a well-rounded experience of the Russian way of life. We found that the Second World War they referred to as the “Great Patriotic War” had had a profound effect on their nation, especially their unity, patriotism and pride.

Each morning our little group had a parade in front of the entrance of our hotel to the amazement and enjoy-



ment of a few tourists and local onlookers. Aaaandag. Regs Rig...Nommer...Uittree! We were still very smart and felt the upshot of the esprit de corps that still existed amongst us from the time of the South African Border War we had all participated in. Gerrie Hugo was appointed our parade commander and Leopold Scholtz was our “Merker”. Tatiana Davydova, the wife of Igor, would later on look at one of the photographs taken and quietly remark: “They are still warriors!”

Roll Call: Garth Pienaar; Barry Fowler; Steve and Debra van Wyngaard; Gerrie and Bodil Hugo; Mike and Yvonne Beyl; Roland and Henriette de Vries all present and correct and ready to march.

1 June

On the 1st of June we set off with our guide and Igor Ignatovich to experience the Metro Railway System - the “Underground”! It was enthralling to experience their national rail system that had been developed from 1933 onwards - even before the Second World War had started. It had served as bomb shelters during the war. This was a fun trip and we viewed the many

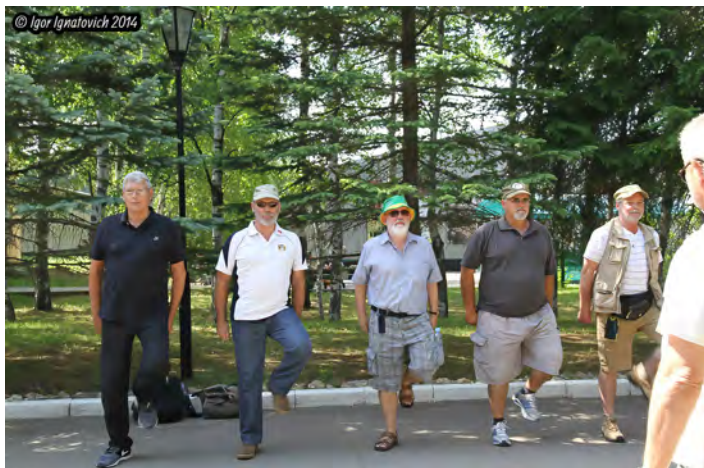
beautifully decorated halls and stations in awe. The creation of this vast system and the building of its infrastructure was a monumental achievement, something Leopold Scholtz described as being comparable to “castles” beneath the ground.

The underground took us to the Military Museum in Moscow, which was another WOW to a force of ten! Leopold and I could pose for a photograph next to a Russian MiG-21. It was similar to those which had a go at us during the final throes of the Border War between the Lomba and Quito Cuanavale rivers in south-east Angola in 1987-1988. Better this way, this one was grounded.

We had a ball of a time darting in and out amongst the many military exhibits like children. It was fun to watch Mike Beyl and Steve van Wyngaard from the side. To see who of them could loot the most, with permission of course it needs to be said. Russian steel helmets, metal dixies, water bottles, forage caps decorated with badges etcetera-etcetera. Lunch was served to us Russian military style, complete with typical World War II era Russian military eating utensils Mk 1 inside a “camouflaged bunker”. Pea soup, coarse bread and something else we did not recognise were dished up. No condensed milk or esbit.

A Russian media team from a local television station followed us all the way - like Ruth and Naomi to find out what the hell this trip was all about. It was like Koevoet or for that matter 101 Battalion tracking Swapo. So we told them...! They would later on broadcast their version of the story to the Russian public about the trials and tribulations a few soldiers had experienced in a bygone war in southern Africa.

None of the young members of the media crew knew about this war. They listened to our stories and were





captivated by some of the accounts and the fact that “here we were”, together as former foes. Still, the many thoughts about that particular war were uppermost in our collective minds and about the soldiers who had paid the highest sacrifice. Lest we forget!

We suddenly felt at home amongst our new found Russian friends. We captured some new ones as the hours rolled by and as we “fought” through from the one objective to the next. This was fun. Is that not what life is all about. Then it was back to base, the Holiday Inn. The one close to McDonalds. And a place where some of our wives bought a few leather jackets.

That evening we spent in the pleasant company of Maxim and Igor. It was easy to laugh and to joke. Gifts were exchanged. Maxim and Igor became the proud owners of the sought-after 61 Mech operational badge (61 Meg Balkie) bestowed on them by Mike Beyl. All of us experienced a rites of passage in a way - former foes became close friends and closer still! That was it! We did it.

The programme was then coordinated in somewhat more detail. This time around it was a combined plan...fighting together to achieve togetherness. Not to make war against each other. However, a plan is a basis for change and we were ready to adapt and have fun as the campaign strategy unfolded along the way. We had signed up for an epic adventure. Execute!

2 June

The next day, the second of June 2014 and counting. After breakfast and our morning parade our small combat team set off to discover the capital city of Russia. Moscow or bust! We were accompanied by the eloquent Sergei Karamaev. He still had to write an



exam on strategic studies that afternoon as soon as he left us. “So what”, he said...”your visit is important to us!” More so, this amazing man was fluent in Afrikaans. Above all, he loved Afrikaans folk songs and could jubilantly sing a few lines with us.

We later on found that the same applied to Maxim and Igor who had a fine collection of Afrikaans folk songs. Furthermore, we discovered that they all loved Afrikaans and could recite many of the words in our home language. Bliksem and donder and all that. They also loved ‘Braaivleis’ and the smell and feel of the African bush as we did. They were our kind of people, the robust kind! We could fight a “war” with them if need be.

We took in some of the iconic sights of the capital city of Russia; the heart of Moscow. The Red Square with St Basil’s Cathedral and the famous red brick walls of the Kremlin. Within the Kremlin walls we visited the former residence of the Russian Tsars and also discovered the huge Tsar’s Cannon and famous bell. There were artillery pieces as well captured from their war with Napoleon in 1812.

Moscow had been attacked by the grand army of Napoleon in 1812 and was surrounded by the German army during the Second World War. None of these armies could subdue the resolute Russian people and the cold winters which took its toll on the invading forces. The Volga River we would fare on later had also witnessed a number of ferocious wars fought through the ages.

I could see from the side Henriette observing the GUM adjacent to the Kremlin, a historic complex now converted into a massive shopping centre. All the brand names were there, Gucci and what have you. I thought by myself: “This is a good time to throw some smoke and withdraw, stuit en onttrek nou...”!

Who could think in the seventies and eighties, with the bush war raging intermittently over our northern borders, that in June 2014 a few veteran soldiers and their wives from South Africa will be standing here on Red Square. Behind what was then referred to as the Iron Curtain.

To top it all Mike and Bodil laid a small cross bearing flowers and the emblem of 61 Mechanised Battalion Group at the walls of the Kremlin on behalf of our group and our people back in South Africa. At Alexandrovsky Garden home to the grave of the “Unknown Soldier”. This was a poignant as well as a proud moment for all of us. Our small ceremony set free the emotions not only of ourselves, but of the other onlookers as well. There were other South Africans amongst them watching in awe.

I thought by myself: Politicians start wars for dubious reasons, whilst soldiers create better forms of peace after the dust and the cordite have settled.

That evening: D-Day...H-Hour was approaching fast now. This was why we were here, to meet with our erstwhile adversaries who stood against us in the struggle for the liberation of southern Africa. There were different political and military viewpoints then of course, but with the same objective, namely to create better forms of peace all round! We could not wait to meet the few Russian stalwarts who belonged to the “Union of Veterans of Angola”! Our new-found friends.

Our mission was accomplished when we closed in on their headquarters at about 19h00 in a bus not a six-wheeled Ratel combat vehicle! We did it! This was

going to be something extraordinary for all of us. A few South African military veterans and their former foes from Russia coming together.

Many of them had served as military advisers, specialists, supporting staff and interpreters in Angola. Many of their former comrades had spilled their blood in Angola. We all had something in common. We were all proud of our former careers as soldiers, we had lost dear friends in the war for southern Africa and still loved Africa dearly. So be it. Here we were today gathering as friends, also in remembrance of our fallen!

We were met at their headquarters by our amicable host and highly decorated Colonel (Retired) Vadim Sagatsjko. He was the chairman of the Russian Union of Veterans of Angola. Electricity coursed through the evening. We could feel the magical moment when we met for the first time as brothers in arms – a clash of friendship this time, not arms. Those who had fought against each other years before in Africa.

After the speeches and exchanging of gifts the fun started. Plaques from 61 Mech (Mike Beyl)...201 Battalion (Steve van Wyngaard)...South African Military Veterans Organisation of Australasia (SAMVOA - Garth Pienaar)...Special Forces (Barry Fowler)...and... The works were handed out. I could present another copy of my book “Eye of the Firestorm” to Vadim for their military museum. In return we received Russian military water bottles as gifts, ration packs, traditional Russian silk and woollen scarves for the men and ladies, badges and campaign medals from the Angolan war. Thank you for this wonderful gesture Russian veterans from Angola.

One of the members present at our gathering was a remarkable gentleman: Dr Andrei Tokarev, Head of the Centre for Southern African Studies at their





Military University (Associate Professor, Institute for African Studies Academy of Sciences). Andrei had co-authored “Bush War - the Road to Cuito Cuanavale” and knew what war in Africa was about. He was also a veteran from the operation in Angola the South Africans referred to as “Savannah”. Later on a jubilant Gerrie Hugo came to me and exclaimed: “I found a Russian veteran from Savannah!” He had captured Andrei Tokarev without any shots being fired.

By the way, Garth Pienaar gave an exquisite speech eloquently and fluently in Russian, which reads as follows in English: “Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen. It is a great pleasure for ex-South African soldiers to be here in Moscow with the Russian/Angolan Veterans and thank you for your hospitality and friendship. It is only proper that after many years of fighting that we, the last warriors of the Cold War now come together as friends and “brothers in arms” to honour the memory of our friends and comrades who died in service of their country. So please stand and join us in a toast to FALLEN COMRADES - WE WILL REMEMBER THEM.....”

After a quiet moment instant spontaneity and high spirits followed as if by signal...red over green...Go! Forming, storming, norming and performing. There were more exchanges of toasts and stories as the Vodka flowed. Excitement! Strength indeed lies in companionship and mobility!

Contact, contact, wait... A boisterous and over energetic former Russian airborne colonel (by the powers vested in him), now took command of Steve van Wyngaard and Mike Beyl and proclaimed them to be his sons. It need not be said that his gruesome threesome did not remain sane for the remainder of the evening. Fight through the objective not onto it



was their motto. The three Musketeers did not have a patch on them. How were we ever going to create a clean break-away by the end of day? What the hell! During a less rowdy moment Maxim said to Henriette: “If a Russian soldier can hang a scarf around the shoulders of a South African woman peace is indeed a reality”.

3 June

The next day created its own set of memories as if by magic as Vadim, Igor and Tatiana accompanied us to the Russian Tank Museum south of Moscow. On arrival we could hear the staccato clatter of machine guns nearby, triggering instant soldiery memories of a bygone era. Once again we felt at home as we discovered an impressive array of armour from the days of yore. Gerrie’s beloved Panhard (Eland)-90 was there as well!

Mike Beyl took the opportunity to drill the hell out of our group during a pause in “battle”. Fun was had once again, smiles and laughter all round, surprised spectators gaping. We could still do a number of intricate drill movements and think back of the days when we were soldiers. Soon afterwards we could spend another quiet moment at a T-34 Russian tank that had become the grave of a Russian driver during the Second World War with the relief of Leningrad. His tank was recovered during the sixties from a watery grave where it had fallen through the ice. Salute to a fallen comrade! During those days the South Africans and Russians had fought together in Europe as allies against the German Wehrmacht. Amazing! Medical personnel from Russia had also supported the “Boers” against the British invaders during the Anglo-Boer War in 1899-1902.

We now boarded the river cruiser MS Nikolai Cher-

nyshevsky to travel from Moscow to St Petersburg along the rivers, lakes and canals of Russia. This is undoubtedly one of the best ways to view the fascinating sights of these two great cities and to discover the spectacular interiors of Russia. We were taken command of by the beautiful and most professional Elena Koltsova, our tour leader and guide. We would have appointed her a combat group commander in the South African Defence Force at any time. Thank you Elena!

4 June

4 June 2014 was another day to be recorded in the annals of our journey. Before departing the river cruise passenger terminal on 5 June we were invited to visit the datsja (summer house) of Maxim and Svetlana Gladkov on the outskirts of Moscow. This was an extreme honour bestowed on our small group of South Africans. We had a “Braai” of course, played darts and Ladi-Da and laughed and talked whilst we cemented our friendship. Intimacy is at the heart; the whole greater than the sum of the parts.

Russian-Angolan Veteran Andrei Karamaev was there as well. What a wonderful story teller he was. One of his larger-than-life tales was a hilarious one shared with us in good humour. During the eighties he was with a small group of Russian advisers at a specific trouble spot in the southern part of Angola. The South African forces were attacking nearby whilst the Russians anxiously awaited a catastrophe to happen. They were poised on a few unserviceable Russian Military vehicles it may be added. One of the trucks, declared “beyond local repair”, had been placed on blocks. Escape by lorry was therefore not an option and they only had Lady Luck to rely on. “Will the South

Africans pass us by Dear Lord? Fortunately the small clan of Russian advisers were spared an embarrassing moment on this particular day in war torn Angola. In the words of Andrei: “If the South Africans found us like this they would have killed themselves laughing!” This was Africa where our Russian friends soon learned that the Angolan Army was not too well-disposed of maintaining their military equipment. So be it. Take that Russians!

Eventually we had to return to the Chernyshevsky by nightfall. On the way our mini-bus came to a sudden halt whilst the driver high-tailed into a nearby shopping centre. Only to re-appear a few moments later with a drab-green wooden rifle box containing a glass AK-47 rifle filled with Vodka. How the hell was Steve van Wyngaard going to get his excess baggage, surplus military kit, memorabilia and Debra with her leather coat through customs and back to Dubai?

On arrival at the passenger terminal the high-spirited Mike Beyl (self-proclaimed stay-behind party) remained behind to say farewell to our bus driver and Leopold Scholtz, the latter who was returning to his hotel. Allegedly (circumstantial evidence later to be confirmed at his “court martial”) Mike vanished into a nearby forest in search of a “Lilly” (army style urinal). He probably turned around at some time and lost his bearing for a while. In the meantime back on the Chernyshevsky his bereaved wife Yvonne and myself were searching for him, but alas it was all in vain. We eventually declared him missing in action. It was later on confirmed that Mike had somehow crossed the Volga River twice before returning to the cruise ship just before stand-to at First-Light. Welcome back Mike; court martial pending as well as a snap course in navigation.



For friendship in abundance and for hosting us in Moscow we need to thank our new found Russian friends from our hearts. What can we say Vadim, Maxim, Igor and the many others we had the fortune to meet. Thank you for the many precious experiences shared which will echo in eternity. Salute brothers and sisters!

Ship ahoy! Battle design: We set sail on 5 June and were set to arrive at St Petersburg on 11 June. Each day we had a wakeup call and a friendly good morning over the ship's intercom. What followed then... cruising, dining, sight-seeing, optional excursions and many-many memorable moments also on the after-deck? Netso Gerrie Hugo!!!! Any questions?

6 June

On 6 June our voyage took us to the historic town of Uglich on the Volga River, first documented in 1148. The town's historical significance was due to the suspicious death of Dmitry Ivanov, son of Ivan the Terrible. Dmitry was exiled to Uglich in 1584, but was found dead in questionable circumstances seven years later. The church of Dimitri on the blood was built in his memory.

7 June

On 7 June we visited the ancient city of Yaroslavl, founded in 1010 by Yaroslavl Mudri (Yaroslavl the Wise). That afternoon we were treated to a typical Russian tea ceremony. "Make sure you put on comfortable shoes for the next day", it resounded over the ships bullhorns. This was to be our excursion to Goritsy, a tiny village settlement on the edge of the White Lake. The main attraction was the Kirrillo-Be-lozerski Monastery founded in 1397.

Then we were ready to set sail for the island of Kizhi located on Lake Onega. The island had been made famous by its collection of wooden churches. The centrepiece being the twenty-two domed church of the Transfiguration, built completely without the use of nails. The island had been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site and was one of the many highlight of our tour. Dinner that night on the Chernyshevsky was a pirate theme. The true colours and heritage of Garth Bloody Black Beard Pienaar came to the fore! Har-har and a bottle of Vodka.

10 June

10 June 2014 was a special day to be remembered by all of us. We enjoyed a visit to the historic village of Mandrogui gracing the shores of the River Svir. The village is a representation of traditional Russian life with wooden bridges, a vodka museum and craft centre. The same evening there was a Russian talent show which took place after dinner. The South Africans performed Jan Pierewiet to the enjoyment of all those on board!

However, prior to the festivities that evening our small group performed a special intimate in-house ceremony on board the cruise ship, as the Volga flowed beneath us. Garth Pienaar was selected as our parade commander and master of ceremonies and he performed eloquently once again - thank you Garth. Miniature wooden crosses were pitched overboard into the Volga in remembrance of our fallen: By Mike Beyl for those of 61 Mech during Operation Smokeshell on 10 June 1980; Gerrie Hugo for Operation Savannah in 1975-1976; Garth Pienaar for the South African and Russian Veterans who had fallen in the many wars they had fought in...The ode by our Master at Arms: "At the going down of the sun we will remember them...."!

11 June

On the 11th of June we arrived at St Petersburg,



Mike Beyl

Remembering and honouring Operation Sceptic, codename Smokeshell, which took place on 10 June 1980 where we lost to many Good men and Warriors. This photo was taken on 10 June 2014 on the Volga river in Russia, 34 years after Smokeshell to the day.



ready to explore this wonderful city previously called Leningrad. The tour took in some of the most famous historical sites including the exchange, Palace square and the magnificent Winter Palace, St Isaac's Cathedral, Cathedral of the Saviour on the Spilled Blood, Peter and Paul Fortress and Nevsky Prospekt, the City's main thoroughfare. That afternoon we headed

for the world-renowned Hermitage museum founded in 1764.

I took a photograph of a large painting of the Battle of Borodino for my friend Prof Abel Esterhuyse back home where he teaches at the South African Military Academy. This battle is one of his favourites. Unfortunately Abel we did not have the time available to visit the site located 120km west of Moscow.

At the Battle of Borodino between the French Army of Napoleon and the Soviets on 7 September 1812 there were 74,000 casualties in one day. The final count were French: 30,000 killed or wounded; Russians 44,000 killed or wounded. It was at Borodino where Russian general Mikhail Illaraionovich Kutuzov had decided to make a stand against the invading French Army of Napoleon. The Russians were able to stage a withdrawal after a series of vicious frontal attacks were launched by Napoleon. It is interesting to note that in the first three months of the invasion of Russia, Napoleon lost a third of his force to hardship and disease. After the Battle of Borodino the French occupied Moscow, but the Russians' refusal to surrender led to a nightmare winter retreat from which Napoleon never recovered.

12 June

12 June saw us visiting the Lower Park at Petrodvorets (Petershof). Later that day many of us took optional river and canal tours and some made ready to visit the Military-Historical Museum of Artillery, Engineers and Signal Corps the next day. This is the oldest military museum in Russia. A raid on a Russian military surplus store by Mike, Gerrie, Garth and Barry followed in the wake of the aforementioned visit. Fortunately they found this treasure trove as Yvonne and Debra were the navigators and not Mike. That evening on board of the cruise ship we held a stand-to inspection to view all their goodies. How the hell was Steve going to fit all of this into his suitcases (more than three by now)? He promptly took possession of Debra's suitcases as well. In the adjacent cabin Henriette was subtly fitting her range of Matroyska dolls bought for our grandchildren into my lone duffel-bag. Yours' is not to wonder why Roland, but to do or die....Okay that happened during the charge of the light brigade. Enough said!

13 June

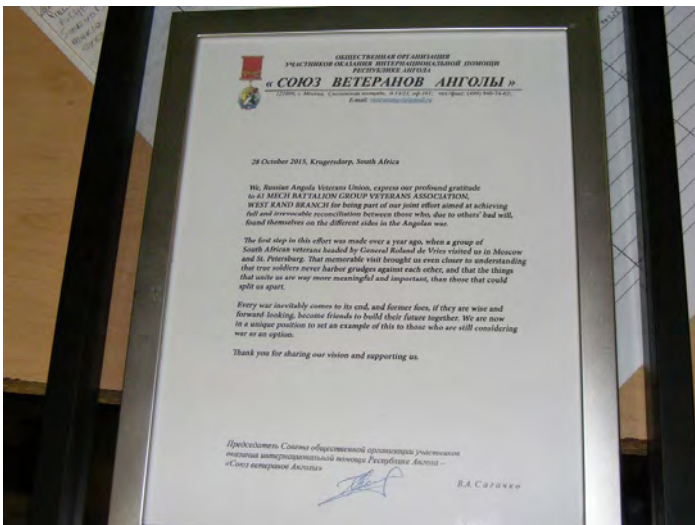
On 13 June Henriette and I had the chance to visit the

We Reached Out to Maxim Gladkov 29 October 2015

Another very successful “Skouerskuur” (shoulder rubbing) with the Westrand Region of 61 Mech. Thank you so much Mike Beryl for organising this. To all members and friends attended, thank you. Our companionship and spirit between us is very special and we should treasure it and try to even strengthen it more.

To Mike, thank you again for all your efforts and organising of these functions in the past. You did it with great passion and you took the Westrand region to the top of the mountain.

Thank you Laurie and his team from the Warrior Moth club, for treating us as always. Much appreciated!!!!



We Reached Out to Gareth Rutherford

Gareth Rutherford was a National Serviceman and participated in Ops Smokeshell where he distinguished himself for bravery for which he was decorated with the Honoris Crux medal,

This is the amazing story of a band of brothers who trained together and fought together. Who sacrificed their own safety for the sake of fellow platoon members.

It is also the story of the firm bond between them, tangible even decades after that day in Ops Smokeshell.



Form in War

We were based at 61 Mech Bn Gp at Omuthiya in South West Africa when somehow the rumour got out that we were to go on an operation. All of a sudden our letters got stopped, and everybody was getting excited.

We still did a lot of training and were briefed on the target area. The maps and photographs were left in the tents for us, so that we could study them and get an idea of what the target area looked like. We were told exactly what we were going to do, with whom

we were going into the attack, and in which part of the area. We were told that the strike aircraft would first do the bombing, the paratroopers would be dropped, and then we would move in.

At last we had a full scale rehearsal of the actual attack, the whole “do” Closer and closer to the border — stop/start, stop/start, all the way. We rounded up at Eenhana and everybody said goodbye, cheers, good luck, see you, right?, and was running from Ratel to Ratel.



We slept in the “town” of Mulemba, some 90 km. into Angola. I can still see Rob de Vito at his Ratel. He stood guard the whole night all by himself. He took everybody else’s guard shift, and he sat on his Ratel, staring into the night; didn’t want to sleep, he just stayed there by himself.

We moved off at 5 o’clock the next morning and at 1 o’clock we were nearing the target area.

Then we were there. Platoon I’s target area. There were 4 Ratels in our platoon — 21, 21A, 21B (mine) and 21C, and two 90 mm support Ratels. The strike aircraft had just done their job. We heard the last of their bombing, and there were some bangs from the artillery as well. Then we went in.



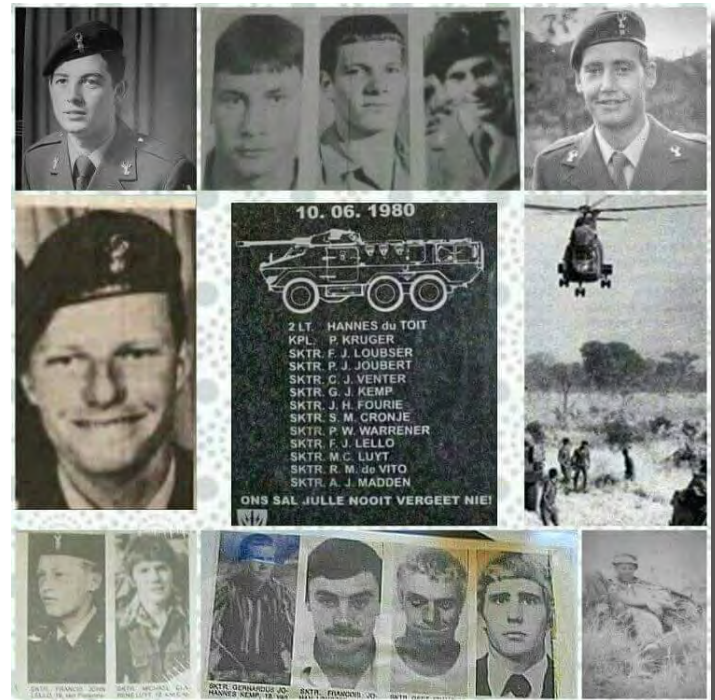


The bush became thicker and thicker as our platoon of Ratels moved forward in formation, 21, 21 Alpha, 21 Bravo and 21 Charlie.

"There's one!" somebody shouted. More shouts, and the chaps began shooting their 20 mils. Ploughing through the dense, hedgelike undergrowth, hundreds of terrified terrs flitted past and the crack of their AK 47's was distinctly heard. I shot my first. I had been shooting on single and had just changed to automatic when I saw him in front of my line of fire. I raked him, and my memory photographed him as his hat flew off and he reeled back — then we were gone and past, and I didn't have time to think about it.

Then we turned round and realised that we had just skimmed the left flank of the target area. Coming back, we went directly over the target, and all of a sudden there were Swapos running all over the place.

Then it happened — not tack tack any more, but DOOF DOOOF DOOOOF, about three per second, heavy automatic fire. Memory of the briefing we had back at base, of huge anti-aircraft guns, 4 barrels, 8 ft. high, 5 man crew — cutting through a Ratel like butter. Then the order came for us to deploy out of our Ratels. The doors flew open and out into the safety of "smallness" we ran for cover, then down. Everybody was lying on the ground in a "rondom verdediging", shooting in any bushes that were nearby. I saw smoke from a burning Ratel. Oh, I didn't know it was a Ratel then; I just saw a big pall of black smoke, and there was quite a lot of confusion at that time. John-



ny Arnold and I, broke off to the right and attacked a trench. I threw two grenades, one missed and landed on the side, and then I gave cover fire while Johnny threw one on the other side.

Suddenly they were calling for a Medic, for our Platoon Medic, Piet Joubert, had been shot. I was the Section Medic, so I went off. It was 21 Charlie, our Ratel standing there with a flat tyre and the doors all open, and it was some time since it had been hit. And right next to it was this anti-aircraft gun. The Ratel had like ridden up on to the thing, just about, for it was so well camouflaged that one couldn't see it at all — and got hit at almost pointblank range.

I ran up to the Ratel and saw an. . . an arm next to it. "Turn off the motor! my Platoon Sergeant shouted at me, for the engine was still running. I climbed in through the door, over the back seat of the driver,



wondering, “Now, where’s the driver?”, and there’s so much glass, and there were dead guys in there. I saw this guy hanging upside down, and I knew it was one of my very good friends. I . . . pressed the button to put the kill on the motor, and nothing happened. Maybe I didn’t press hard enough.

It’s just . . . all of a sudden I was s-c-a-r-e-d. I . . . I didn’t want to be in that machine, in that Ratel. I . . . it was like being in a ghost house. I . . . I was scared, because there were dead chaps in there, dead . . . dear friends. I backed out, cutting my hand on the glass, on the shattered bulletproof glass that was strewn all over the inside. Then, I guess, it must have dawned upon me what I had to do, for I cannot remember too clearly. I was kind of sleepwalking, in my own little world, moved about by a Power outside myself. There might have been a thousand of the enemy around me, and I wouldn’t have seen them. I only remember that we were in a kind of clearing in the bush, with my own Ratel, 21 Bravo, some 40 metres away, and that I



had to get my Medic Kit and go to work. Bullets were flying about as I dashed over to the Ratel, and I remember looking up and seeing my gunner looking at me as I ran, peeping out through the top of the turret; and he had already opened the door with his foot — it’s hydraulically controlled — and even before I got there, the door was open and I grabbed my Medic Kit and was going again.

Back there reality really hit me — back there with my Medic Kit among my friends: Mike and Frank — Frank Lello that had slept in the bed next to mine in basics; Paul Kruger and Steve Cronje and Rob De Vito — Rob that was standing guard all by himself the previous night. As I ran round to the other side I

saw Pip Warrener, the chap that I had hitched down to Cape Town with, Andrew Madden and Martin French — all three wounded, but alive. Having seen it all, I was completely at ease. It’s not that I wasn’t afraid any more — fear I still had, but there was no . . . there was no more of me. I wasn’t me. It was something else, Someone else inside me. God, maybe, I don’t know. And I was trying to put in drips, but they had been lying there for some time and their blood pressures were low. It was difficult to get a drip into any of them. I gave Socegon to Martin French and Pip but not to Andrew Madden — he had, amongst other things, a bad neck injury and breathing problems. I gave him two Codis tablets to suck. How absurd it must sound now! Then they brought Kemp along and I attended to him. They said the choppers were coming. The chaps were out there in “rondom verdediging”; and the sun was shining; and there were flies on the blood; and they kept on throwing those damned green flares. Yet not a word of complaint from any of those wounded guys. If ever I got into a position like theirs, I only hope I could be as brave as them. They were a-m-a-z-i-n g!

I spoke to Pip and asked him, “How are you?”, and he said — his leg was blown off — and he said, “N-o-o, I’m feeling fine.” And Martin French — he had shrapnel all in the back of his legs — every time I wanted to attend to him, he would say, “No, go . . . go and fix those guys up first.” They were so g-o-o-d! They amazed me, the way they reacted under extremely harsh circumstances.

Every fighting soldier has a first time — the moment when, with body and mind and all his senses, he meets death; when, with the roar and the smell and the fury of war, he kills and finds himself among the dead and the wounded and the devastation wrought by the tools of his trade. It’s a picture that becomes ingrained in his mind, losing its sharpness as time rolls on, but never its reality; and fear is a living part of that reality — the fear that can be smelled, like the brimstone and the cordite, the dust and the mud, the blood and the guts, and the rancidity of sweating bodies.

Gareth Rutherford

Honoris Crux recipients pictured here with the Prime Minister, Mr P. W. Botha, are (standing): Cmdt C.N. Breytenbach, Lt Cpl G.T. Rutherford, Maj C.A. Meerholz, Lt G.J. Parkin, Maj P.E. Kruger, Mrs M.E. Greyling, Mrs A. Roussouw, Rfn B.J. Gibson, Lt J.J. Potgieter, Rfn B. Maré, Rfn C.N. McNamara. Kneeling: Maj P.J. Stannard, Sgt G.M. Christie, Sgt K.B. Rice, Rfn P.P. de Kock, Rfn A.S. de Lange and Rfn L.B. Southey. F Sgt S. Hoebel was not present when this photograph was taken.



THE Honoris Crux (Silver) and the Honoris Crux, South Africa's third and fourth highest peace time decorations for bravery, were awarded by the Prime Minister, Mr P.W. Botha, to 18 members of

HONORIS CRUX:

Gareth was awarded the Honoris Crux medal number 78. Citation

Decorated for his actions on 10 June 1980:
L/Cpl G.T. Rutherford HC, 1 SA Infantry Battalion; attached to 61 Mechanised Battalion Group, SA Infantry Corps.

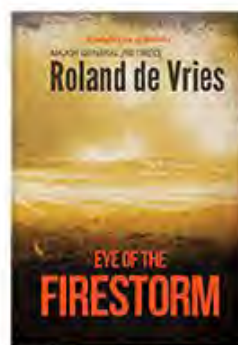
Lance Corporal Gareth Rutherford was awarded the Honoris Crux for his bravery and his actions to recover and save other wounded members of his stricken platoon after several Ratels had been hit by SWAPO anti-aircraft weapons used in the ground role during the attack on objective Smokeshell on 10 June 1980 (Operation Sceptic).

He finished his military service at the end of 1980 and commenced his studies in Civil Engineering at the Cape Technikon.

Many years passed. He got married and fathered a son. Then he signed up for a contract in the middle east.

"I followed my career which brought me to the Middle-East on contract work. Everything went fine for years until one fateful day. I was to leave the Middle East back to Cape Town on 18 September 2008. On my way to the Kuwait airport, a friend was asked to make a detour into the city to pick up tyres for a friend. Thinking nothing of it, I stopped at a tyre shop and a group of men loaded the vehicle I was travelling in.

On my way to the airport, I was pulled over and law enforcement officials found Hashish inside the tyres. I was arrested. My lawyer hardly ever pitched up for court dates and that I didn't have an interpreter during court proceedings, which adversely affected me. In the end I was made to sign a confession which was written in Arabic and not translated to me."



Eye of the Firestorm

ISBN
978-0-9921912-5-2

Die lewensverhaal van Roland de Vries handel nie net oor Oorlogvoering in Afrika nie maar ook oor die lewe, hoop, sekuriteit, bevel, leierskap en transformasie. Die leser word telkens verras oor die Grensoorlog soos nuwe insigte gedeel word.

Sunday Times

2 July 2017

The power of friendship should never be underestimated as you never know when you might need a helping hand.

Such is the case of SANDF military veteran Gareth Rutherford who is serving a life sentence in Kuwait for drug trafficking – a charge he vehemently denies.

His military friends have rallied behind him in an attempt to get him freed or his sentence commuted. Dawid Lotter, a military friend, is at his wits' end in his attempts to try to save Rutherford but he refuses to give up until he is reunited with his friend. Lotter has set up an online petition that will hopefully get his friend's sentence mitigated. Rutherford's initial sentence was a death sentence but was later changed to a life sentence.

Lotter has called on the help of his fellow army men that served with him and Rutherford to sign the petition and spread the word on it. Lotter aims to get 5,000 signatures on the petition so that he can take it to the Emir in Kuwait and explain that Rutherford has been wrongly sentenced for a charge of a doubtful nature. The petition currently has 1,799 signatures.

Gart 4: Guilt or Innocence

There were bonds of gold as hundreds of veterans reached out to me, as I lay incarcerated in a foreign prison far away and hopelessly cut off from any contact with family and friends.

Friendships forged over years of living and working and training together as young soldiers, extended out to me there without condemnation or reserve. As I found myself lost in the depths of a foreign Jail, lonely and bewildered by a savage injustice, the same we see in global structures today where the real criminals rule and good men are silenced. There were many barriers for me to overcome before I was able to determine what had happened and there were no lawyers or

diplomats powerful enough to overcome the almighty judicial authority.

The only course left to me was to persevere because to fail or give up at this stage would leave me condemned even as I contemplated suicide. Initially the prison conditions were horrific as I battled to find my place amongst many others also desperate to survive. Boarding school and army had prepared me well for this ordeal but no previous lodgings were as tough as this for me, after having been completely wiped out of life and blackened with a crime so false and impossible that I was sure every day that someone would come to their senses soon enough. They did not and as the months rolled on it looked like they would all soon forget me. They didn't.

Veterans far and wide got to hear about this and talked amongst themselves. In time I managed to get to an illegal phone where I was able to initiate widespread contact and report on the situation. News amongst our networks spread and more key figures managed to get into close contact with me as I sat so firmly muzzled in this maximum security prison holding hordes of murderers and drug traffickers. I found myself alone, as I was a tall European amongst a sea of others. I stuck out quite prominently and became accustomed to the way they would all watch me wherever I went. There were not many that could speak English and I could not speak Arabic at all.



Embassy was concerned for my welfare as I was so frequently accosted by fanatical extremist Isis inmates. The prison authorities were then compelled to place me into a different block for political prisoners where many spoke English. As time went by I was able to set a good example wherever I went. I cleaned the sludge off the floor and wiped the grunge off the black shower walls. There were actually white tiles under there and I started the long process of cleaning that no one else had ever considered doing. My shower space became bright and clean and many came in to see it. I said nothing.

The dusty exercise yards were knee high in litter, cigarette stubs and cat shit. Every day I would fill a dustbin bag as the others sat slouching against the walls. Watching me. Then I would run circuits and they would watch frowning with disapproval at my unusually disturbing activity. Every day that yard got cleaner and soon a few started to join me collecting the stinking mess. There are nine yards like that alongside each of the blocks and all of them were equally covered in refuse. Empty drink bottles, cans, boxes, chip packets, tins, foam food containers and cigarette ends. The wardens started to see the difference. I said nothing. They just watched.

The veterans were clearly becoming quite worried about me when the embassy was unable to make any effective approach. They then initiated closer contact with the Embassy via London and Washington,



which made a big difference for me as more interest in my welfare was exposing the situation better and preventing it all being swept under the carpet. School friends and veterans began to send me small amounts of money which was a huge relief and for me it was confirmation that there were so many out there who really cared. My spirits were buoyed and I was able to buy a small illegal mobile phone with a Wi-Fi router which changed everything.

More and more comrade veterans realised that there was definitely something very wrong with the system that had so carelessly condemned me.

For the Kuwaiti prosecutors it was a means to point fingers away from their own. No amount of cooperation or logical explanations would convince them of their error. The more I tried to cooperate, the deeper the hole became. It was clearly futile to attempt to explain everything where there were no credible witnesses or any valid evidence. The Veterans did not stop trying to get in touch with me and kept up the pressure on Embassy. General Roland sent me a military book which the embassy felt would not be permitted into the prison system, so I never received it.

I watched it's progress on my little phone as it travelled from stage to stage as many vets undertook to get the book to Kuwait and then on to me. I am so grateful to them even so, for their efforts and compassion in this



YOUR VOICE COUNTS

APPEAL TO THE AUTHORITIES AND THE EMIR OF KUWAIT TO FREE GARETH RUTHERFORD

2281 people have signed this petition. [Add your name now!](#)

Gavin Behr north west 966 Comments



PETITION TO GET GARETH RUTHERFORD RELEASED FROM JAIL IN KUWAIT

Gareth Rutherford is a SADF Military Veteran. He was decorated with the Honoris Crux in 1980, during Operation Sceptic as part of 61 Mechanised Bn Gp. He was employed as a UK Ministry of Defence Contractor in Kuwait from September 2003 as an operations maintenance manager with a commendable reputation. On 18th Sept 2008 he was arrested for a crime of very doubtful credibility. He was tormented by his captors for weeks under extreme duress and was coerced into signing fabricated statements in Arabic. He suffered much humiliation and cruelty as he tried unsuccessfully to defend his case. Since 2008 he has been serving a life sentence in Kuwait Central Prison where he has wasted away in futility. Years lost without any prospect of release. You can follow his story on his Blog

<http://gareth54.blogspot.co.za/search?updated-max=...> consider signing this petition to bring this malpractice to the attention of the British Embassy and the Office of the Emir of Kuwait.



undertaking.

What followed here was the gradual recovery of my self-esteem as my alleged convictions became more clearly delinquent to everyone. It was clear that the most senior prison managers were aware that they had imprisoned the wrong guy,

but they were powerless to interfere with the judicial decree or all the powerful political motives. I finally earned my own cell and took pride in making it comfortable and clean in preparation for what I could see was going to be a long stay. My shower is through that blue door in the photo and the tiles are sparkling white.

The HC medal I received way back in 1980 suddenly became a more prominent issue as it highlighted my military background along with a commendable reputation which all helped to improve my political profile at the embassy and amongst thousands of veterans.

As far as I was concerned all that heroism was gone and past but our vets dredged it all up and presented it loud and clearly in the many appeals for my complete



exoneration and immediate release. I needed any and all the glowing testimonials I could lay my hands on from far and wide.

Greatly respected and revered friends and veterans alike began to direct powerful letters of appeal to the embassies and the Kuwaiti authori-



ties. Some wrote to the Queen and prime ministers, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, David Cameron only to receive polite avoidances and ominous silences. It became clear there was no one who would dare confront the wayward Kuwaiti judiciary at the risk of damaging political relations during this period of the Arab Spring. My own family endured the most terrible levels of shame as my convictions were further confirmed and the steel doors closed down even tighter. Petitions started circulating and the local newspapers published an article which tracked the number of responses that were mounting every day. See attached photo.

Soon the prison bosses had seen my picture in the papers and brought the situation to the attention of the Kuwaiti authorities. The veterans rallied and the



for cut in jail term

KUWAIT CITY, July 5: The friends of a South African military man, Gareth Rutherford, sentenced to life imprisonment in Kuwait since 2008 after being convicted in a drug trafficking case has launched an online campaign to demand his release or reduction in jail term, reports Al-Rai daily.

His military friends have rallied behind him in an attempt to get him freed or his sentence commuted.

According to the case papers on his way to the airport to catch a flight to Cape Town from Kuwait on Sept 18, 2008 he was asked to make a detour into the city to pick up a package for a friend.

Rutherford did not think much of it. He stopped at a tire shop and a group of men loaded the vehicle he was travelling in with tyres. When he left the tire shop, he drove straight into what he believes was a trap.

Law enforcement officials cornered him. They searched his vehicle and found drugs hidden inside the tyres.

Dawid Lotter, a military friend is attempting to try to save Rutherford but he refuses to give up until he is reunited with his friend.

Lotter has set up an online petition that will hopefully get his friend's sentence reduced. Rutherford's initial sentence was a death sentence but was later changed to a life sentence.

Lotter explains the two met in 1980 during Operation Sceptic and during this operation, Rutherford was awarded a medal for the bravery he displayed during the war.

Lotter has called on the help of his fellow army men that were...



Rutherford

Kuwait authorities searched desperately for an excuse to get rid of me. They could not concede that they had made this mistake costing my company millions of dollars in lost contracts and great embarrassment.. they could not set me free too early either so they waited for the birthday of their leader, the Amir of Kuwait.

On the very same day exactly ten years after my arrest I was lifted onto the shoulders of hundreds of cheering inmates who carried me to the waiting escort at the huge steel door that had held me so tightly all these years. It was always a joyful occasion as each of us finally left through that thick steel door. I gave my tools and all my most precious possessions away. Often it was equally sad to see the faces of so many of those still left behind, with so many more years to wait.

I was even more inspired as I received communications from a few of the greats, Dippies, Roland, Dawid Lotter, Terblanche and Savides. Highlanders and Steenkamp amongst many esteemed veteran leaders.

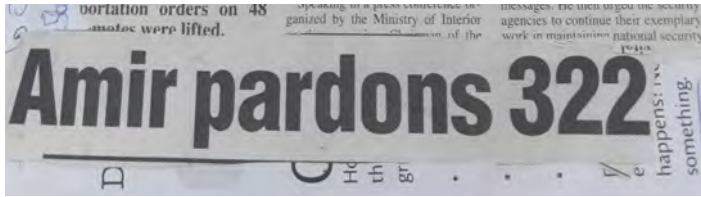


61 Veterans all became aware of the situation and grouped together very effectively. Their efforts inflated my heart as I took on new challenges. I learnt to read and write in Arabic and participated in intensive religious studies at the Islamic schools within the prison system. I joined the workshops and took on several courses as an electrician and a TV satellite technician. My privileges were extended as the prison managers saw my efforts and the examples that I had been setting.

So much more positive achievements transpired as I received so much encouragement from our veteran groups all over the world. They cared and I was proud to be one of them as much as they were all so proud of me.

I took on every day with success and started playing the musical instrument as the music so long dear revived inside my heart. I was able to send a recording which I played, of the hymn, "Amazing Grace" which





was played at my dear mother's funeral. My son started to interact with me gradually over Whatsapp and shared with me some clips he had recorded of himself playing the saxophone so beautifully. There were so many concerned and generous friends, family and veterans who all contributed to the vast combined freedom project. It definitely made a huge difference. It worked.

The day finally came when I was escorted to the Airport and ushered onto a plane to London where I was

met by Family, friends and veterans. My airfares paid in full by great friends and veteran groups. Onward I went to Johannesburg and Cape town where further great welcomes awaited me. Many who had shared in the anguish of this unfortunate human travesty. Many who had watched as my old mother and youngest brother both died waiting for my return. Many who had watched in sadness and horror at the shame and loss endured by my young son and brave Wife Linda who found themselves completely destitute and abandoned on a single day in 2008. I finally returned home and was able to attend a number of welcoming functions for both family and military veterans.



Readjusting

I had no home or job or significant financial backing and I was rapidly approaching my sixtieth birth-date. This was a huge landmark I was to find. A few friends kindly approached me to carry out some short-term projects which was very convenient as I made best use of the time to search the job market high and low. I really did go to great lengths even travelling as far as Falkland Islands, Namibia and across to the far eastern Transvaal.

Today I am gratefully fit and well managing to earn some money and get by comfortably. I am grateful to be able to go off for long periods to assist my brother with his business of boreholes where I am able to earn further small amounts of income. I have recently registered a business and will be entering a new phase of self-employment and many more new challenges.

I am eternally grateful to all my veteran friends who knew me and regardless of my guilt or innocence gave me the benefit of the doubt when I really need-



ed it most.

There was no more shame in the end and once again, I regained my greatest pride being once again,

a 61 Mech Veteran.

My gratitude to you all.

Smokeshell Veterans welcomes Gareth back on 9 May 2019 in Rondebosch

Attending among others:

John Kruger, Randall Sheldon, Brian Dyason, Denis Coyne, Andre Upton, Murray Mac Donald, Jenny and Robin Ward-Cox and Andrew Whitaker.



Ons Reik Uit Na Tannie Lorna Loubser - September 2021

Mike en Yvonne Beyl se besoek aan Lorna Loubser gedurende September 2021

Deur Mike Beyl



Lorna Loubser was die moeder van Francois Loubser wat oorlede is met Operasie Sceptic, Smokeshell. Ek het vir jare reeds opgelet dat sy kommentaar lewer op Facebook groepe wat handel oor die grensoolog. Opmerkings soos: my seun was ook daar,, my seun sou nou so oud soos julle gewees het... ens. Mens kon duidelik aanvoel dat sy en haar familie nog treur oor Francois. Lorna is al diep in haar 80s maar nog baie skerp.



Met die vrystelling van die “The Battle for Smokeshell” het ek besluit om die boek vir haar te koop en haar te verras met ’n besoek en om die geskenk aan haar te oorhandig, uit eerbied trots en meegevoel.

Ek en my vrou Yvonne het ’n afspraak met haar en haar oorblywende seun Jacques gemaak. Ek geklee in my volle 61 MVA Veterane drag en my vrou

Yvonne, gewapen met ’n bossie blomme het gaan aanklop by hulle woning in die Kaap. Hulle het ons ingenooi en baie vriendelik ontvang. Ons is op tee en koek getrakteer en lekker gesels. Later moes ek ’n paar ongemaklike vrae beantwoord. Jare vantevore het ’n klomp Rambos vir haar gaan kuier en ’n klomp snert kwytgeraak oor Francois se dood en die hantering van sy oorskot. Haar grootste bekommernis was of sy in 1980 haar seun begrawe het en nie die oorblyfsels van iemand anders nie. Dit was moeilik om te beantwoord maar ek dink ek kon dit tuisbring, op my manier, dat dit wel haar geliefde seun was en sy was gemaklik daarmee.





Please accept this book in honor and respect of Francois Laibser and the other 12 good men, who sadly lost their young lives on 10 June 1980. We pray that this book will bring some closure and peace to you all and that we, the ones who stayed behind, will always remember those who paid the highest price on that fateful day.

They were the real Heroes!

From Mike Bayl, a veteran and fellow soldier of Operation Septic, Smokeshell.

[Signature]



Ons Reik Uit Na Oom Maritz Cronje - 2022

10 Junie 1980

77210839BG Rifleman Stephen Maritz Cronje.

He crawled out from the driver's position to the left rear door where he was struck in the back by a 14,5mm round that killed him instantly. He was 19.

Deur

Niel Bruwer



Dit bly n hartseer storie, die storie van Steve Cronje. Steve was 'n baie gewilde jong man in PMB, en in my navrae oor hom en sy familie het dit al hoe duideliker geword.

Steve was hoofseun van een van die bekendste skole in Kwa Zulu Natal. Ongelukkig is Steve op die 10 de Junie 1980, gedurende Operasie Smokeshell oorlede. Die besonderhede van daai gebeurtenis is alles in die boek "The Battle for Smokeshell" beskryf.

My deel van die storie gaan egter oor wat 40 jaar later



gebeur het.

Toe Jannie Niewoudt my die eerste keer van sy planne vertel het om 'n jaarlikse Skouerskuur by Gariep te hou het ek nie in my wildste drome verwag hoe groot die gaan wees nie. Die eerste een was 'n reuse sukses en ek besluit toe om my vrou, Tracy saam te neem na die jaar sin. Dit was 'n wen besluit. Saam het ons gelag, gehuil op die damwal en in die reën gebraaï. Toe ons na die naweek uit die oord wegry was Tracy se woorde..."Ek kom volgende jaar weer saam."

Min het ons besef watter nadraai die naweek sou hê. Toe Tracy die Dinsdagoogend by haar gym instap toe wil al haar vriende hoor waar sy die naweek was. Tracy trek los en vertel hulle toe van die naweek, en meer belangrik...die kameradie tussen 61 Meg se lede. Sy vertel hulle van ons en wat 61 Meg nog steeds vir my familie beteken.

Een van Tracy se vriendinne vertel toe van haar swaer wat in Angola gesneuwel het. Na 'n bietjie uitvrae besef Tracy dat Steve Cronje in 61 Meg was. Opgewonde kom sy later by ons besigheid aan en vertel my van die toeval!

Opgewonde bel ek dadelik vir Johan Booysen. "Bakgat!", Sê hy en begin dadelik reëlings te tref dat ons Steve se Pa, oom Maritz Cronje kan opvlieg na ons jaarlikse parade toe. Ongelukkig kon die familie later nie deelneem nie agv ander verpligtinge. Oom Maritz, nogsteeds so sterk soos 'n os is al 94 en die vlug mag miskien moeilik gewees het vir hom.

Daar word toe besluit dat ek met die familie kontak moet maak en my hulde gaan betuig.

Toe ek in oom Maritz se kantoor instap vang die silwer skietbalkie dadelik my oog.

"Wow oom" se ek, ek het daai balkie baie min in my lewe gesien. Oom Maritz stap trots nader en beduie na die ander muur waar sertifikate en medaljes hang. Die hele familie is Springbok skuts!

Ek het met 'n beknopte keel na die oom en Leon, sy broer, se pyn geluister. Ek kon nie vrae beatwoord nie, ek was nie daar nie. Ek kon maar net luister. Dit was 'n baie emosionele oomblik. Tracy het my vergesel en dit was vir haar 'n baie groot oomblik. Ons het daar uitgestap as vriende.

Ek verstaan nie altyd die lewe nie. Ek verstaan nie altyd wat in my eie kop aangaan nie. Partykeer knak mens en doen of sê goed wat ons nie bedoel nie. Maar julle is my broers, lede van 61 Meg.

Daai dag toe ek daar wegstap besef ek dat alles OK gaan wees. Ek besef dat ons organisasie groter is as net 'n normale Veterane Organisasie. Ons maak 'n positiewe verskil in mense se lewens. Ons vra nie "handsouts" nie...ons klim in en maak dinge gebeur!

Toe ek in my voertuig klim kyk ek op en sien oom Maritz in sy kantoor agter sy tafel sit. In sy hande is die boek wat ek nou net namens Johan aan hom oorhandig het.

En die trane loop. Ek het nie woorde nie....ek is net bitter hartseer en baie, baie trots.



RATEL: QUO VADIS?

Everything Has Its Time (really?) We all know the truism that is used when someone thinks it is time to get rid of something. Like one's wife insisting that one's favourite shirt/chair/cap has reached its "sell by" date, or the kids feel that we've outlived our house of 30 years and it's "time to move on". To reinforce matters, the truism is biblical, and we are "bible-bashed" by being quoted Ecclesiastes 3, especially Verse 6 (here from NIV, abridged):

1 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:

2 a time to be born and a time to die, ...

3 ... a time to tear down and a time to build,

6 ... a time to keep and a time to throw away,

7 a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak,

8 ... a time for war and a time for peace.

While this may be true in many instances, the field of military hardware tends more towards Ecclesiastes 1: 9, which gives us a handy counter to the "get rid of it" suggestions:

By

***Brig Genl (Ret)
Tony Savides***



"9... what has been, will be again, what has been done will be done again, there is nothing new under the sun."

Examples abound. For instance, when the B-52 bomber is finally removed from USAF service around the year 2050, it will have been in service for 100 years. So too the M2 50 Cal (12,7mm) Browning MG developed circa 1918 and in service since 1933,



thus already in its 90th year of service. The Centurion tank is now a veteran of 76 years, while the C-130 is a stately 66-year-old. Ratel too is already a vintage, although a mere pup at only 48 years old.

Badgered by the Badger?

The Ratel ICV, which entered service in 1975 and full service from 1976, was due for replacement by the Badger ICV with initial deployment circa 2018. Alas, this has not happened and, unless a miracle rabbit is pulled out of a miracle hat, is unlikely to happen, despite the requirement for a new ICV being well thought out and initially well planned. A Ratel upgrade was not considered as an alternative but, with the possible, or even probable, demise of the Badger ICV programme, such an upgrade might now be essential.

Readers may themselves have uttered, seen or heard the following, or similar quotes over the past decade or so: “Ratel is still the best ICV in the world”, “The Badger ICV is not nearly as good as Ratel”, “We should have upgraded Ratel many years ago – a more powerful engine, bigger gun, more protection, more ammunition, better suspension, etc, etc, etc.”

While most such views are well-intended and even of great value, they often reflect a lack of knowledge or understanding of the military acquisition processes and procedures, that aim at acquiring, upgrading, modifying and even withdrawing from service military equipment designated “Main Equipment”, which includes armoured fighting vehicles. Many also fail (or do not wish) to acknowledge that Ratel’s day is done – but is it?

There are many drivers of any such requirements, but I see the two most important as “The Need” and “Funding”. The former includes many facets from timing (urgency) to training, equipment failure, doctrinal issues, natural and institutional environmental issues, numbers, logistics, and a whole host of others. “Funding” however, is more basic yet critically important and simply boils down to affordability. Tying these two (and many more) drivers together are the User Requirement (UR) and User Requirement Specification (URS), the former in more general terms and the latter in detail. For example, the UR might specify “carry a mechanised infantry section”, while the URS will detail the personnel, equipment, weapons, role, etc of each member of the section. In



essence, the UR states the desired “end result” and the environment in which it must be achieved, and the URS provides more detail on crucial aspects. The end product and end result will be measured against the final URS and the accompanying technical specification derived from it.

Trade-offs

One of the more challenging aspects of any acquisition or upgrade programme is that of “trade-offs”, when some requirements have to be sacrificed in order to accommodate others. For example, one of the more common trade-offs in armoured vehicle design is that of protection vs mobility vs fire power. One particularly difficult trade-off with which users must always wrestle is the “affordability” (read “cost”) factor against which almost every other factor or requirement must be measured! Simply put, you cannot have what you cannot afford!

Upgrades, while usually much more affordable and more speedily delivered than new acquisitions, are often limited in scope and timing by technical or user issues (or both), with cost still an ever-present over-riding factor. Bringing Ratel up to the same standard and specification as the Badger, would be extremely expensive and probably unaffordable.

Affordability also has another facet, which is particularly relevant in this case, i.e. spending large amounts on an upgrade could push any hope of a replacement system even further into the future (“to the right” in project management and funding jargon)? Once the current decision makers have moved on or retired, the next generation might well argue that so much has al-

ready been spent and the upgraded product is so good, that a new product is no longer required or cannot be afforded. This is the “good enough is good enough, even if it’s not perfect” approach. (Remember Ratel Log, the new generation MBT, AA variants based on Rooikat, etc? each scuppered by cost, timing and the availability of an existing, albeit lesser, capability).

Then there is another relevant truism i.e. “nothing is as permanent as a temporary (or interim) solution in the military!” Examples abound. The temporary “Bester Building” behind the old DHQ in (then) Potgieter Street was temporary solution way back in the 1970s and is still there today. Similarly, when re-activated in the 1960s, units like 5 SAI Bn in Ladysmith were housed in temporary accommodation that was erected during the Second world War. The Mamba 4x4 MPV was a temporary solution for the mobility of mot inf units while the Saracen was being upgraded and a new MPV (Project Velskoen) was being pursued. Saracen has long gone, as has Velskoen, but Mamba marches on!

Ratel to the rescue of Badger!

A Ratel upgrade programme could be the saviour and not, as some would believe, the mortal enemy of the Badger programme. A relatively simple and affordable upgrade will iron out many current technical problems on Ratel, such as the old engine and other components for which the acquisition of spares is increasingly a problem and constitute a life-extension and retain Ratel in service for at least another decade or two. The aim should be to only replace that which must be replaced and to retain as much of the current hull, driveline and other systems as possible. There are many advantages to this such as skills retention, unchanged doctrine and training, etc, but these are not discussed further here. The more such a programme is seen (by politicians and other decision makers) as “recycling” rather than “replacing”, the better the chances of a programme being approved. There is surely a point where the upgrade is no longer worth the cost and suddenly other local vehicles such as Paramount’s Mbombe and Denel’s RG-35 become aspirant Ratel and Badger replacements?

One of Ratel’s design “drawbacks” was that its configuration all but precluded certain variants where a large fighting compartment and a rear door or ramp would be ideal. These include armoured ambulances, armoured repair and recovery vehicles, armoured

command post vehicles and armoured logistic vehicles. One possibility, which has already been proven in two prototypes, is to move the (new) engine forward, freeing up a larger fighting compartment with a rear ramp, making it an ideal variant for such roles, and others. Some Ratels could thus be converted for such roles while others retain the current configuration, but all with the necessary critical and important upgrades that will be required.

A Ratel upgrade will enable the Badger programme to be reconstituted and moved to the right until funds may again be available. Thus the programme need not be scrapped. Of course, by the time the programme gets under way again, Badger itself might also have had, or need to have, a bit of a design upgrade or modernisation, which will have to be factored into any project.

Once the Badger programme is underway again, acquisition can be limited to what is affordable and specifically to the most important variants only, such as the ICV itself, unit and sub-unit command vehicles, 60mm turreted mortar, Missile, and Fire Support. A total of around 187 or less, instead all 244 on the more expensive Badger platform). The rest of the command variants, the ambulance, and perhaps others, can be accommodated in the upgraded Ratel. Of course it may not be quite as mobile and quite as protected as Badger, but clever engineering and adapted doctrine will ensure that Ratel can fully fulfil its combat and combat support roles.

As soon as the possibility of an SANDF Ratel upgrade rears its head, every man and his dog who has an armoured vehicle capability will want to be in the mix and every veteran and modern user will have suggestions (even demands) of what should be included. Then, of course, there are vehicle engineers who will see this as an opportunity to show their skills, and companies vying for the business opportunities, while all the user wants is a useable ICV and variants!

Remember Ecclesiastes 1: 9?

“9... what has been, will be again, what has been done will be done again, there is nothing new under the sun.”

As long ago as 2006, two companies saw the proverbial writing on the wall as far as potential Ratel upgrades were concerned, and as possible business



iKlwa

A modified Ratel 20 hull with, a standard Ratel 20 turret

iKlwa

A modified Ratel 20 hull with an OHWS



Ratel Mk IV

A modified Ratel 20 hull with a standard Ratel 90 turret.



opportunities for Ratels in service elsewhere. SANDF Ratels were due for gradual replacement by the Badger ICV so this was not (then) a viable potential market. These were BAE Systems, Land Systems South Africa (LSSA) with its iKlwa ICV and Mechanology with its “Ratel Mk IV” (not an official SANDF designation).

iKlwa was an engineer’s solution.

A magnificent product with a powerful new engine at the left front door, close-coupled to the Renk gearbox and removable as a powerpack unit. It had add-on armour, larger wheels, a rear ramp, improved mine protection, improved seating and a host of other features. The Mk IV was more user-oriented and aimed at a so-called “cheap and cheerful” solution. Mechanology simply moved the existing engine forward, coupled it to the Renk gearbox, used the left-side door as the rear ramp, improved the seating and did little else – perhaps a “poor man’s solution” next to iKlwa’s “Rolls Royce”. Oh, and they fitted a standard Ratel 90 turret to this modified Ratel 20 hull. There was a plan for a new engine, but this was not part of the original design.



Both prototypes had similar fighting compartments and the engines moved but that is about where the similarity ends. The Mk IV hinted at the major drawback of Ratel i.e. the outdated engine with its spares problem but did not solve it. iKlwa addressed and solved the engine problem, and also achieved a better all-round weight distribution – but more, I feel, to suit LSSA and its engineers than from a user perspective (my personal opinion). While the idea of a removable powerack was great, it meant that iKlwa could not accommodate the (then) current series of turrets, except by moving them rearward onto the fighting compartment (as in the picture above), or replacing them with more modern weapon systems such as overhead weapon stations (OHWS). The larger wheels (16.00x20) were great but the majority of vehicles in F- Echelon were on 14.00x 20, thus a potential logistic headache for someone.

In both cases, the right-side door was retained, and the idea was to make Ratel a better vehicle with a wider scope of roles via the rear ramp and larger fighting compartment. Similarly, both variants could accommodate face-to-face or back-to-back seating. Certainly, this was a great improvement immediately accommodating a wider range of variants and uses.

Clearly, iKlwa was a better prospect in most aspects and, except for the turret position, perhaps the “ideal”, but it was a relatively expensive option. The Mk IV was the entry-level version to demonstrate the principle of moving the engine and was at an earlier stage of development. Only one prototype of each was built.

We have, as it were, iKlwa at the “ideal” end of the upgrade spectrum and Mk IV at the lower end (assuming Mk IV with a new engine, thus “Mk IV+”). iKlwa belongs to Denel Vehicle Systems (the successor to LSSA) but I have no idea of the status or whereabouts. The original Mk IV is owned by a local company and is still a runner. Quite possibly, both will re-emerge soon as a potential Ratel upgrade project looms.

In 2022, some 16 years later, ADG Mobility, part of the OTT Group, has thrown its proverbial hat into the Ratel upgrade ring with its so-called Ratel SLEP (Service Life Extension Plan) displayed at the AAD 2022 exhibition in September this year. SLEP features a new engine, new gearbox, new drop-down box and replacement of some other driveline components. It has add-on armour and also features an upgraded Ratel 20 turret. SLEP is clearly based on actual user requirements (or perceptions thereof) and addresses most, if not all, of the current technical and maintenance issues. It is still an early prototype (XDM?) and currently without the added advantage of an extended multi-role with a rear ramp, although this is under development.

Neither Mk IV, iKlwa or SLEP were designed according to an approved SANDF requirement and the emergence of a UR and URS from the SANDF

should determine the direction (“terminal effect” and extent of upgrade) required. At least, the Ratel engine must surely be replaced with a suitable new generation unit. However, as most of us know, fitting something new onto an old, existing item may seem fine in the short term but could lead to problems later as other components “struggle to keep up”. This is probably one of the reasons SLEP has many new components. The pros and cons of the SLEP offering and or vs those of the other two prototypes are not discussed further.

Cost effective vs affordably effective

Cost effective implies the most advantageous use of available funds while affordably effective implies that only such funds as can be afforded must be spent – even if the required terminal effect is the same in both cases. It also implies saving costs. The difference lies in the principles of “tailoring” and “trade-off”, which together eliminate any nice-to-haves and even important elements that are just not affordable and, primarily, is aimed at saving money. Project teams should be evaluated on how they achieve the required terminal effects with the least expenditure.

The Ratel upgrade conundrum facing the SANDF, is not so much whether to upgrade but rather to what extent to upgrade. This will centre almost entirely on five factors:

1. The URS: Critical upgrades (without which Ratel cannot fulfil its envisaged role), other important upgrades, number of ICVs and variants required, urgency (time scales), etc.
2. Costs of individual, grouped, and total upgrades, (scope or extent of the upgrade, other important upgrades, life-cycle costs, etc). As far as possible, existing systems and sub-systems should be retained, albeit with refurbishment or even upgrade at that level.
3. Life expectancy of the upgrade (for how long Ratel must remain in service).
4. Affordability. Available budget, trade-offs between funds available, critical upgrades, important upgrades, numbers, variants, timings, etc. The more of the current Ratel can be retained, the more this will be seen as a re-cycling project rather than a new one. The write-off of expensive and still serviceable components, such as the Renk gearbox, will be questioned, as will anything seen to be a “nice-to-have”.
5. The advisability of having two parallel Ratel fleets,

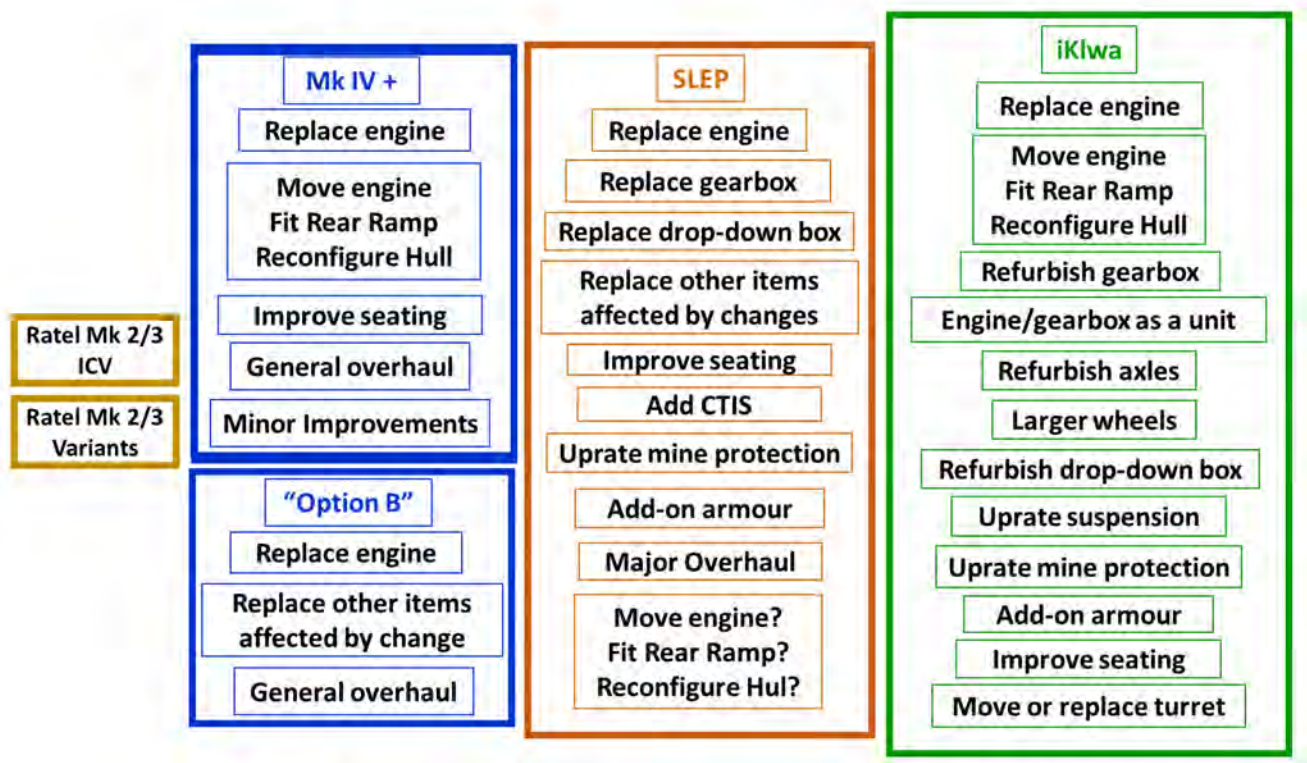


one “fully” upgraded and the other with the minimum (e.g. only a new engine).

The greater the scope and number of the upgrades, the more the project will cost and the longer it will take to complete it. Simplistically, just changing the engine will be relatively cheap but compatibility the other existing sub-systems and their life expectancy, may lead to other essential changes such as those indicated in SLEP. It must be remembered that each change, however minor or small, must go through a thorough configuration process to ensure that it conforms to the updated technical specification and is the same on each vehicle. It is not advisable to simply cut into the hull to fit a new or adjusted component or system without the process being planned, verified and approved.

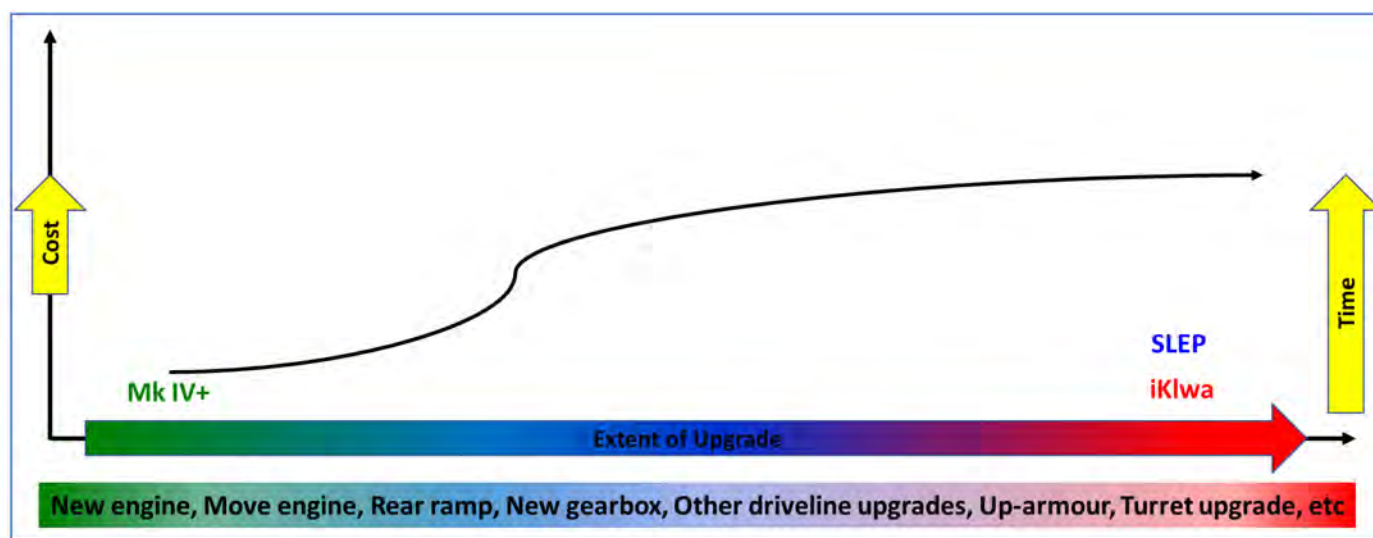
Using the three prototypes mentioned earlier, the graph indicates the effect of specification creep on costs and time, assuming that a Mk IV+ upgrade is cheaper than SLEP and iKlwa upgrades are similar in complexity and cost. “The ideal” probably lies somewhere in the centre, with SLEP arguably a good starting point as, although it advocates major component changes (engine, gearbox, drop down box, etc), it retains the position of the engine and the current turrets. iKlwa adapts the existing major components and only replaces the engine but moves it forward. Which is the cheaper or more affordable option, initially and over time (life-cycle costs), will have to be evaluated. Upgrades to the turret and weapon systems are excluded as a turret upgrade may, of necessity and for budgeting reasons, be a separate, albeit linked, programme.

The following table summarises the upgrades in the three prototypes with “Option B” being a Mk IV upgrade without moving the engine. Note: these are



for illustration only may not be fully representative of the changes as dictated by the three companies concerned.

is following graph is also for illustration only and not based on actual upgrades and costs. It merely shows that the more upgrades are included and the higher their specification, the longer the programme will take and the more it will cost. The "jump" is to illustrate going beyond the "simply change the engine and related items" approach.



Quo Vadis?

If there is to be a Ratel upgrade programme, it is im-
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perative that the SANDF, through the URS, indicate what they wish to be done, rather than merely evaluate what is offered. Without a URS and its derived technical specification, there will be nothing, except perceptions and opinions against which to evaluate any contenders or offerings. Once there is approval for such a project, the SANDF, via Armscor, might issue a URS and ask for proposals from the defence industry to determine what upgrades are viable and what the implications thereof might be. This will enable the SANDF to refine the URS and then to issue RFP (Request for Proposal) from suitable suppliers. The evaluation of such proposals will determine what is the most affordably effective approach to be followed.

It is up to the users, Armscor and the Industry to address the various technical, logistic, life-cycle, budgetary, programme management and other issues, so discussion in this article on such problems and

factors as front axle loading, balance, life-cycle costs, etc, serve no useful purpose.

Conclusion

The content, extent and ramifications of the user requirements, technical specifications, industry offerings, etc are literally the epitome of “how long is a piece of string” and are therefore open to debate by all and sundry, not least of which the armchair generals and armchair critic on Facebook. Any comment, suggestions and proposals in this regard should therefore be directed to the SANDF and not the 61 MVA or the author of this piece!



The conflict in Angola taught us one thing: A country that cannot develop its own weapons, must rather stay out of conflict situations. A guerrilla war requires low level technology but, as in Angola, it can easily escalate to a level of semi-conventional conflict where a high level of technology is needed. Weaponry based on high level technology demands high calibre manpower and the ability to maintain that weaponry.

Magnus Malan

Who won the Battle for Cuito Cuanavale?

No Consensus

The battle of Cuito Cuanavale is one of the most contested subjects in South African Military History. President Fidel Castro succeeded in portraying the battle of Cuito Cuanavale as the battle that turned the tide in southern Africa. Almost 35 years after the start of the battle there is still no consensus on who won.

Who did What, Where, When, Why, to achieve What.

The **Cold War**

The conflict that took place between the Western Powers after WWII

The **Bush War**

The conflict between South Africa and her allies UNITA on the one side and the SWAPO, FAPLA, Zambia, the African National Congress (ANC/MK), the Cubans and the Soviet Union on the other.

Scope

Cuito Cuanavale was not a single battle. It started with the battle for Mavinga and ended with the battle of Cuito Cuanavale. It was a series of battles and clashes that took place in the broad vicinity of the southern Angolan town of Cuito Cuanavale from 1987 to 1989.

Bandwagon Effect

The depiction of Cuito Cuanavale as the most important battle fought in southern Africa caused everybody to want to be a part of the battle. Therefore the battle of Cuito Cuanavale is widely commemorated by most of the parties to the battle and even parties who did not

When

From the Truman Doctrine on 12 March 1947 to the dissolution of the Soviet Union on 26 December 1991

When

From 1966 to 1989.

Where

Globally ideological political economical military etc

Where

In Namibia (then known as South West Africa) and Angola. Cuito Cuanavale was one of the final battles of the Cold War.

Angola is of the opinion that they were victorious and that their victory over the apartheid forces contributed to the independence of Namibia and the destruction of apartheid in South Africa.

Not many members (if any) of the **MK** were involved in the battle of Cuito Cuanavale directly, but they still see it as a victory for MK,

Aim

World dominance

Aim

Regional Stability

Cuba see the battle of Cuito Cuanavale as a milestone that changed the history of South Africa. They are very proud to have played a role in Cuito Cuanavale. From their point of view, the Cubans were victorious

The **Soviet Forces** also feel that they have played an important role. The Cubans and Angolans would not have been able to withstand the attacks without the Soviet support.

South Africa never wanted to take CC. They successfully stopped the Cuban / Fapla advance to Mavinga and Jamba. They forced the enemy to take defensive positions around CC. The SADF was thus victorious in achieving its primary goal and played a part in the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Within the context of the participation of 61 Mech in the 1987 Mavinga / Cuito campaign, it is important to review a few points of analysis. Article 1: The tactical developments tells a unique story on its own. Article 2: This was published in the SADF official newsletter "Paratus" very close after the peace agreement quoting a few reputable and less reputable sources. Article 3: From Maj Genl (Ret) Roland de Vries who participated as a commander during the campaign. Article 4: Written by Maj Sean J. McWilliams from the perspective of Hybrid Warfare. Article 5 By crossreading this 4 articles the reader can form an opinion between Points of View.

To get to the correct answers one must ask the correct questions.

Question: What was the objective of the Bush-War for all belligerents?

Answer: Peace and stability in the sub region. The belligerents was split among ideological lines as part of the Cold War. (Freedom Struggle, National Autonomy, Global Onslaught).

Rhetorical Question

Did the SADF had the logistics and the reserve for a prolonged campaign after Tumpo III ?

Article 1 - Timelines

Macro Timeline

- 1961 Portuguese Colonial War in Angola.
- 1966 SWAPO commits to armed struggle.
- 1975 Civil war in Angola. South Africa got involved on the side of Unita. Cuba and east block on the side of the MPLA.
- 1976 – 1988 ... Border war with Angola.

Micro Timeline

1 May 1987 – SADF deployed two liaison teams east of Cuito Cuanavale to assess the situation. Involvement by the SADF was to remain clandestine. UNITA to stop the FAPLA offensive.

22 June - The SWATF was ordered to support UNITA in halting the FAPLA offensive.

28 August - UNITA admitted they had no prospect of stopping the offensive on its own. UNITA Stinger anti-aircraft missiles to protect the South African artillery. Restrictions on air support by the SA Air Force were lifted and 61 Mechanised Battalion of the SADF was placed on alert at Oshivello in Namibia.

1 September - the SADF assembled 20 Brigade. Mission - to ensure that the FAPLA/Cuban advance



was stopped. Subsequently, the advance of FAPLA's 47 Brigade, attempting to reach Mavinga by moving around the source of the Lomba, was stopped by SADF artillery barrages.

12 and 13 September - elements of 59 FAPLA Brigade crossed the Lomba River to join 47 FAPLA Brigade. They withdrew after being driven off by 20 Brigade.

28 and 29 September - SADF planning approved of a more offensive intervention. The aim was to destroy the FAPLA brigades deployed east of the Cuito River, before the start of the rainy season. The new offensive had to inflict such a crushing blow on FAPLA that no offensive on their part in 1988 would be possible. The FAPLA offensive was finally stopped on **3 October 1987** when 47 Brigade was destroyed by the SADF and UNITA. The remainder of the Angolan forces was then forced back to Cuito Cuanavale. The SADF had completed its mission as FAPLA's offensive capabilities had been neutralised. The SADF, however, could not withdraw and had to ensure that FAPLA did not regroup and resume its offensive.

Maintenance of momentum was forfeited by the SADF as no reserves were available to exploit the favourable situation the SADF enjoyed.

On 9 November, FAPLA's 16 Brigade, in an effort to force the FAPLA forces to the west of the Cuito River, the SADF attacked. Most of the brigade escaped but FAPLA lost all their tanks.

From 9 to 17 November, the last of FAPLA's offensive capabilities were temporarily neutralised. The SADF could neither drive them from the area east of the Cuito River, nor destroy the FAPLA brigades comprehensively and thus allowing these forces to create an adequate defensive position east of the river.

FAPLA was deployed over a wide area and dug in over a limited area of good defensive ground and could not be driven out by artillery alone. A subsequent political decision authorised a deliberate attack on the FAPLA positions east of the Cuito River by the SADF.

The fortification of the Angolan position by Cuba commenced in order to prevent a direct threat to Cuban forces.

15 November - The best Cuban combat units a group of advisors, officials, and cadres were flown to Cuito Cuanavale. The Cuban-Angolan strategy was not merely to stop the SADF at Cuito Cuanavale, but also to lure the SADF into concentrating enough forces so that Cuba could advance and attack in south-western Angola.

25 November - The UN Security Council voted unanimously to condemn the South African intervention, and demanded that South Africa unconditionally withdrew its forces by **20 December**

13 December 1987, Operation HOOPER, was launched by the SADF. According to the operational instruction for Operation HOOPER, the General Officer Commanding the forces of the SA Army in SWA had to destroy the FAPLA forces east of the Cuito River by 31 December 1987.

From **14 December** onwards, the SADF concentrated on air attacks and artillery bombardments. By **24 December**, the bridge over the Cuito had been so weakened by shelling and air attacks that it had to be closed to vehicles. However, the bridge was functioning again by **27 December 1987**. On **3 January**, it was further damaged by a South African air-delivered "smart bomb"

From **29 December 1987 to 3 January 1988**, while the SADF constantly fired its artillery at Cuito Cuanavale, the Cuban High Command decided to redeploy its forces in Menongue to Cuito Cuanavale. The result was a change in the balance of forces, particularly in terms of air superiority, as well as in terms of the anti-aircraft defence of Angola. Cuban commanders took charge and quickly ordered the defensive line, comprising 59 Brigade, 25 Brigade and 21 Brigade, to shorten so that it could be covered by artillery positioned west of the Cuito River.

On 2 January 1988, an attempt was made by the SADF to drive 21 Brigade from its position by delivering maximum fire-power. This second effort failed as well and it became clear that a third deliberate attack would be needed to destroy 21 Brigade.

On 4 January, it became known that the Cuban 50 Brigade was deploying to Cunene Province in south-western Angola. It was at this point that Castro used his now famous boxing analogy to explain the carefully formulated strategy: Cuito Cuanavale in the

east represented the boxer's defensive left fist that blocks the blow, while in the west the powerful right fist had struck, placing the SADF in a perilous position.

On **13 January 1988**, a third South African successful attack on 21 Brigade was launched. They failed, however, to annihilate 21 Brigade and most of the brigade personnel escaped to the Tumpo triangle to reorganise.

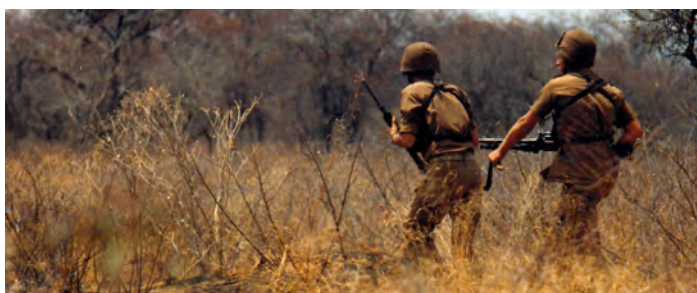
Negotiations on **28 and 29 January 1988** in Luan-da, between Dr Crocker and Angolan representatives, resulted in an agreement by Angola and Cuba about the total withdrawal of Cuban troops in Angola as part of a Southern African peace settlement.

On **14 February 1988**, the SADF achieved a victory by destroying FAPLA's 59 Brigade and driving 21 Brigade and 25 Brigade back into the Tumpo Triangle.

On **25 February 1988**, South African forces attacked FAPLA positions south of the Tumpo River and at Dala to pin down FAPLA in the area. According to SADF commanders involved, the attack on Tumpo failed because of the tactical ability of the Cubans. Two further attacks on Tumpo (on **29 February and 23 March**) again failed because of effective defence by Cuban forces

This final battle at Tumpo, where the SADF lost three tanks in a minefield, proved to be detrimental to the morale of the SADF. The SADF did not succeed in driving the enemy out of their bunkers on the eastern bank of the Cuito River. The SADF lacked the offensive means. The SADF suffered more losses of equipment and personnel than usual and had no substantial reserves available to continue the fight. The Battle for Cuito Cuanavale was effectively over.

On 30 April 1988, a defensive operation, Operation DISPLACE, was launched by the SADF to prevent a FAPLA offensive during 1988. The aim of the oper-



ation was to enclose the bridgehead with a minefield to prevent FAPLA from advancing from the east bank of the Cuito River.

The Strategic Outcomes of Cuito Cuanavale

A scenario unfolded towards the peaceful settlement of disputes in the region, very much in agreement with the expectations of all the major role-players. The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale during 1987 and 1988 was one of the final and most significant battles of the Cold War.

The battle permanently changed the political and strategic landscape of the Southern African region. The peace negotiations that followed in the wake of this battle led to the withdrawal of the South African military from Angola and Namibia, resulting in the independence of Namibia and a negotiated settlement in South Africa. The outcomes of the military campaigns in Angola paved the way for a series of events that led to the achievement of the political objectives of liberation movements in South Africa, Angola and Namibia, supported by the international community.

For the major powers involved in the Cold War, it was also an ideal outcome. Peace in Angola and Namibia contributed to a peaceful end to the Cold War. In addition, Cuba, as major military role-player, could now withdraw from a situation that required extreme sacrifice from its people, but one that resulted in Cuba displaying itself as a reliable partner in the context of the developing world.

The failure of stability and sound governance in an ANC government in South Africa is a complete separate argument.

Paratus 03 March 1989, Cuito Cuanavale. Veil lifted at last.

Col Deon Ferreira press briefing in Windhoek.

His orders were never to occupy Cuito Cuanavale, the commander of Operations Modular, Hooper and Packer in South East Angola in 1987/88, Col Deon Ferreira, told a group of visiting South African journalists. At an information briefing in Windhoek, Col Ferreira faced a barrage of questions over claims by anti-South African groups that South Africa was defeated at Cuito Cuanavale and subsequently forced into the Namibian settlement.

“If defeat for South Africa meant the loss of 31 men, three tanks, five armoured vehicles and three aircraft, then we’d lost. If victory for FAPLA and the Cubans meant the loss of 4 600 men, 94 tanks, 100 armoured vehicles, 9 aircraft and other Soviet equipment valued at more than a billion rand, then they’d won”. Col Ferreira for the first time divulged that his three sets of orders at the time had been:

(a) To halt and reverse the MPLA/Cuban advance on the UNiTA strongholds of Mavinga and Jamba {Op Modular}.

(b) To inflict maximum casualties on the retreating enemy (Op Hooper).

(c) To attempt to force the enemy to retreat to west of the Cuito River (Op Packer).

“We’d succeeded in dispersing the entire enemy force, save one battalion, to beyond the Cuito River”.

Asked why he did not in any event take Cuito Cuanavale. Col Ferreira said that it would certainly not have been impossible, but was quick to point out that intelligent military strategy simply did not allow for the placing of a two mile wide river between one’s own forces and one’s target.

“We were east of the river, remember, and the town was on the west bank”.

Responding to the question as to why this information had not been publicised to counter Angolan claims of a FAPLA victory, the colonel said that due

to the critical sensitive stage the Namibian settlement negotiations had reached at the time. South Africa’s involvement in south east Angola was kept as low keyed as possible so as not to jeopardise the Brazzaville talks.

“For that reason it had been decided to operate under the pretence of limited assistance to UNiTA”. Col Ferreira said that UNITA was in any event indirectly instrumental to much of the South African success story, as they’d cleared the entire south of Angola of FAPLA and SWAPO presence, and so laid the basis for super functional South African logistic supply lines.

“The enemy’s Soviet MiG 23’s were the single most serious threat to our operations,” the colonel said. “We were constantly harassed by them, but fortunately UNITA had Stingers which kept them at high altitudes”.

Asked about the key to the South African successes, Col Ferreira said it had to be the troops’ fine discipline and training, as well as the massive artillery advantages of the South African G5 and G6 long range guns.

Helmoed-Romer Heitman in Jane’s Defence Weekly of 30 January 1988:

“Since 10 January. 170 to 200 shells have hit targets in and around the town (Cuito Cuanavale) daily. “The vital air base close to the town is thought to have been inoperative for some time, with radar and air defence systems destroyed by shelling, the runway cratered and aircraft movements rendered hazardous in the extreme – several having been destroyed on the ground.

Fighting around the town since 10 January has claimed 192 FAPLA soldiers and five Cubans.” “The 21st Brigade (FAPLA) has already suffered heavy casualties in the fighting on the Lomba River in November, finally being withdrawn when it ceased to be an effective fighting machine.

The Angolan Minister of Defence says that South African Air Force aircraft hit targets in the town and supply dumps. The claim that it is South African artillery which is causing much of the damage could be closer to the truth”.

The leftist Africa Confidential

(5 February 1988, Vol 29 No 3: issue of 5 February 1988, Vol 29 No 3:)

“There’s not much left of Cuito Cuanavale after four weeks of siege by 4 000 UNITA troops and heavy bombardment by the South African artillery which is supporting them.” The siege of Cuito Cuanavale was a consequence of the battle of Mavinga, fought on the banks of the Lomba River last October. UNITA, stiffened with South African help, threw back an advance by FAPLA, with logistical support from their Cuban and Soviet allies, in December. South African Defence Minister Magnus Malan, decided to press home his advantage after winning the battle of Mavinga by pursuing the retreating FAPLA and launching an all out assault on Cuito Cuanavale.”

The US Soldier of Fortune magazine in its issue of May 1988 said:

its issue of May 1988 said: “ Reports from Lisbon indicate that UNiTA’s ground attackers (supported by South African specialists and technicians) lobbed up to two hundred 155 mm shells a day into the beleaguered town from South African G5 and self-propelled G6 howitzers. Cuito Cuanavale is reported to be in shambles; its buildings destroyed and its radar network knocked out. The removal of Cuito Cuanavale from the overall Angolan radar network grid creates a serious gap in the aerial defences of Angola, a situation which the Soviet Union has spent billions of dollars trying to prevent. Aircraft that were left behind at the airstrip also became casualties of this ongoing battle.

Additionally, South African forces that came to the aid of Savimbi in a bid to prevent a breakthrough to the UNiTA headquarters in south east Angola have captured several state-of-the-art Soviet missile and radar systems, between sixty and eighty new and undamaged Soviet T54/55 tanks and large numbers of armoured and logistical vehicles. South Africa has replaced Israel as the source of captured, new generation Soviet military weapons systems. Brought back behind South African lines were more than a dozen complete SAM 8 installations”,



We need to ask whether we lost militarily, politically or strategically. In military terms we certainly did not lose. There’s no doubt about that at all. The order to withdraw was not given because South Africa was having problems with the military situation.’

General Geldenhuys

Illusion of Victory

**By Major General (Retired)
Roland de Vries**

About winning or losing at Cuito Cuanavale in 1987-1988 and about war and peace.... or was it a win-win for all the belligerents, who were involved in this epic campaign?

I have almost become lethargic at trying to explain the hullabaloo, which the battles surrounding Cuito Cuanavale had become – about the lie President Fidel Castro of Cuba had fabricated so carefully in 1988 to salve his self-esteem. About his mythical victory proclaiming that the SADF, consisting of no more than 3, 000 soldiers, were defeated in the fields of Tumpo east of Cuito.

Even the short-sighted yapping ANC politicians, proclaiming that these battles had led to the demise of the Apartheid system – those of the ANC in governance, who have turned South Africa into the laughingstock of the world over the last two decades. I honestly believe that many Angolans know the truth and realise that they have been hijacked by Castro. It is almost as if the great monument in remembrance of the battles surrounding Cuito Cuanavale negates their brave soldiers, who had fought and died between the Lomba and Cuito rivers. It is heart rendering when you think about this.

When speaking to Angolan soldiers and to some of the Russian military advisors, who were involved in the war, one realises that they know the “real truth”; not the truth shrouded in myth and propaganda, many interested parties have come to perceive without really thinking.

Dr. Leopold Scholtz said it so profoundly during the recent seminar on the 30th Anniversary of the Cuito Cuanavale battles, at Chatham House in London, we attended on 23 March 2018: “Many follow the Cuban rhetoric and hearsay of what had happened in the fields of battle surrounding Cuito Cuanavale and accept it as fact, instead of establishing their findings and viewpoints on true research.”

In a television interview at the Chatham House

seminar, Chester Crocker, the US under-secretary of state for Africa at the time of the Angolan conflict, forthrightly stated that Fidel Castro had fabricated the “Cuito Lie” for his own purpose. That it was meant to cover up the Angolan and Cuban defeat east of the Cuito River and to provide Castro an opportunity to extricate his Cuban forces from an Angolan hellhole. Crocker gives Castro credit for being a clever statesman and shrewd tactician. So be it.

At the same seminar former UNITA intelligence officer Peregrino Isidro Wambu Chindondo, now a lieutenant general in the Angola armed forces, who had fought in the war with us, explicitly stated the following: “The story the Cubans tell about their victory at Cuito Cuanavale is a lie and it will come out. The SADF and UNITA fought against communism and we were successful. Rather than substantiating the lie, the monument at Cuito Cuanavale should become a symbol of peace and reconciliation”.

I believe that the Cuban lie, about what really happened between the Lomba River and Cuito River is starting to falter! I saw it in the eyes of journalists and smiling faces at Chatham House, when the Cuban Ambassador to London read out the age-old Castro rhetoric, without really knowing what the content meant.

The war in southern Angola truly was a turning point, which brought peace to southern Africa. The process led to legitimate negotiations, which resulted in the democratic processes followed to bring political changes to Namibia (1990), South Africa (1994) and Angola (2002). However, it was not a one-sided affair. A communist government did not just suddenly appear overnight and took over those three countries.

During the war for south-east Angola a diminutive combined South African mechanised formation nicknamed 20 Brigade and a few UNITA guerrilla battalions faced more than eight hostile mechanised brigades and two tactical groups in the field. At no stage during this campaign referred to as Operation Modular, were more than 3,000 South African soldiers pitted against the more than 30,000 of the enemy - it was a Gideon's band of brothers. Our young soldiers fighting in support of UNITA were mainly young national servicemen and they did this against an overwhelming enemy who enjoyed complete air supremacy.

This significant episode of the South African Border War was intertwined with the Angolan Civil War and unfolded somewhere between heaven and hell at the far end of the earth. The ground became saturated with the blood of many enemy soldiers. The dense entangled African bushveldt literally lay strewn with the metal remnants of the enemy's military hardware and white-bleached soldiery bones; even from battles fought there in the past. Over this piece of disputed earth, the Russian MiGs screamed and bombed the South African and UNITA forces uncontested from the skies.

Let us for the moment focus on the manoeuvre battles, which raged between the Lomba and Chambinga River from August until mid-December 1987. These were fought successfully by the SADF and UNITA at the operational and tactical levels of war. Significant was the destruction of FAPLA's 47th Brigade on 3 October 1987 by 61 Mechanised Battalion Group on the Lomba River. The enemy was turned, and the remainder of their brigades fled and occupied intermediate defences to the rear. Then followed the successful attack on the 16th Brigade of FAPLA at the source of the Chambinga River on 9 November 1987. During this attack by 4 South African Infantry Battalion and UNITA, a tank squadron of the SADF was used offensively for the first time in battle in Africa since World War II.

The enemy was riled, and the remainder of their forces started fleeing helter-skelter back to the safety that their trenches and minefields at Cuito Cuanavale offered. The South Africans referred to this part of the campaign as the Chambinga Gallop, as they continuously rendered casualty-on-casualty of men and material to their fleeing foe. By mid-December, the Cubans took over command and started profusely to strengthen the defences of the Cuito Cuanavale salient, making maximum use of the Cuito River as natural obstacle to bolster their defences.

Little did South Africa know then that the aftermath of the epic mobile fights for the Lomba and Chambinga would lead to a mammoth grinding struggle to be fought east of Cuito Cuanavale later in January-August 1988 (recorded as operations Hooper, Packer and Displace). Let nobody mislead you; a real battle happened on its eastern shore, with six major attacks being flung against FAPLA brigades in an area referred to as Tumpo. Three of our Olifant main battle

tanks still lie in the minefields where our troops had fought courageously, where precious lives were sacrificed, and the enemy had suffered dearly!

I think of those offerings today with endearment instead of malicious intent for what had been achieved in the end, as these battles were the triggers for peace-making came August-December 1988. Forty-seven SADF soldiers were killed in action during these campaigns; close on three thousand guerrilla fighters of UNITA had died in the field; on the Cuban-Angolan side four thousand and eighty-five soldiers were sacrificed. More than 94 pieces of armour, 92 pieces of other military hardware; 9 MiG combat aircraft and 9 helicopters of Russian origin had been destroyed. In stark comparison 3 tanks, 5 Ratel infantry fighting vehicles, 5 other varieties, 1 Bosbok light reconnaissance aircraft and 2 Mirage combat aircraft of the SADF had been destroyed.

These vast differences in comparison were mind boggling and the reasons for this begged to be answered? How far could the one after the next exhausting tactical successes by a few South African and UNITA warriors take them in southeast Angola? In the process of analysing these battles one should not become overly subjective or emotionally involved on whoever's side!

Remember well, former soldiers of the SADF, who had done your duty so convincingly and fought so well during the South African Border War. Let us view things in context:

- The original aim of FAPLA and the Cubans were to attack Mavinga and Jamba and capture southeast Angola from UNITA. They never succeeded in doing so, because of the timely intervention by the SADF in support of UNITA! The objective of the SADF was to support UNITA in the battle for southeast Angola, which they did compellingly. By the end of April 1988, the main force withdrew from the Cuito Cuanavale front, leaving a token force of 1,000 soldiers in place to support UNITA and keep FAPLA at bay. By the end of August, this small force withdrew from the front when a cease fire agreement was signed at Calueque between South Africa, Angola, and Cuba on the 22nd of August 1988.

- The large coalition Angolan-Cuban force amassed at Cuito Cuanavale never executed one major attack against the South Africans and UNITA, who threatened them from the east; nor endeavoured to cut them off from their support bases at Mavinga and Rundu;

neither did they contemplate going on the counter-offensive to pursue their original plan to capture Mavinga and Jamba. They remained precariously entrenched in the earth behind their minefields at Cuito Cuanavale, a defensive state to which they were addicted. Admittedly, they held the line.

- No Angolan or Cuban armed formation ever crossed over into northern South West Africa (Namibia) to take on the South Africans.

- Take note! The South Africans willingly left Angola and South West Africa (Namibia), once peace ensued in 1988/1989. So, did the 55,000 Cuban soldiers and the many Russian military advisors, who had been deployed in support of FAPLA.

- Never forget, by 1989 Soviet Russia had lost the war in Afghanistan (5 Dec 1979 – 15 Feb 1989) and by November 1989, due to Gorbachev's Glasnost and Perestroika, the iron curtain fell. This led to the demise of the Soviet Union, which dissolved the Cold War threat, creating conditions for political change to happen in South Africa by 1994. We had fought for this; convincingly so!

- Many civilians were hurt in the war for Angola, which touches one's heart. However, remember that the Angolans also brought this on themselves. First it was the long-drawn-out war against the Portuguese until 1975; then came the Angolan civil war, which only ended by April 2002; during the South African Border War the Angolan government supported the South West African Peoples Organisation, which caused the SADF to take their counterinsurgency battle to Angola.

I pronounce that the South African Army, one of the best small armies in the world at the time, fought in such an astute way that the war never escalated to regional status and that our soldiers had fought with honour.

I sincerely believe that some of the reasons the Cubans and Angolans were prepared to opt for peace in 1988, were because of the tactical prowess of our soldiers, outstanding leadership and will to fight when necessary.

I maintain that the purpose of war is to create a better form of peace. This is what the soldiers who fought on all sides had achieved, in the high intensity battles fought in southern Angola from August 1987 until August 1988. However, in Africa peace is never that perfect.

When one looks at South Africa today one could ask

whether this was the kind of peace we had fought for: A country fettered by poor governance; deteriorating service delivery at provincial and local government levels; corruption and greed prevalent all over in government circles; a country besieged by violent crime, which daily threatens the lives of ordinary citizens; ongoing taxi violence; the degrading effect of a country stifled in racial tension and violent protests. We currently live in a criminal state, where the government and its police force does not manage to maintain law and order!

Observe the rapid deterioration of our wonderful country, especially the smaller towns.

Cry our beloved South Africa!

The ANC government has brought shame to South Africa!

However, I remain positive about the amazing prospects South Africa offer also in the quality of its people and continuous lucid human endeavour by many good people.

A last reflective thought, with gratefulness and without regrets: So many individuals, so many truths, each story has more than three sides. Even the myths spread by Fidel Castro about FAPLA winning the battle of Cuito Cuanavale, bless his leathered hide. We knew well that everything did not always go our way in the successive battles fought for southeast Angola. However, the mere fact remains that we were never defeated tactically. As such I had found the reflective thinking and the telling of this short account most enlightening, liberating, satisfying, and rewarding in discharging my responsibility.

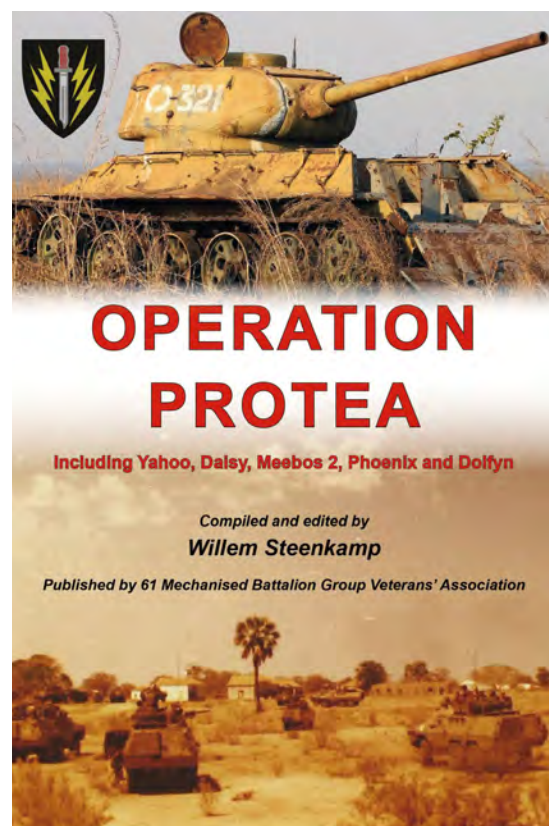
To my mind the South African commanders in the field had done their job extremely well in balancing two consistent pressing responsibilities – the one battling to outweigh the other and the scale was mostly tipped at a precarious angle under dire operational circumstances. On the one end of the gauge balanced the accountability to win tactically at all cost, because there was no alternative. On the other end hinged the responsibility not to incur undue casualties and to bring our troops safely home. This we had done. In a final reflection about the war, we were involved in South West Africa and Angola... yesterday, today, and tomorrow I can only feel and express gratefulness. Our combined best had proved good enough. I truly hope that the senseless bickering about who had won or lost will not harm the amazing friendship

we had established with our Angolan veteran colleagues, Short sighted politicians and the stupid media seeking sensation can learn from soldiers about pursuing peace, and in establishing lasting friendships through reconciliation.

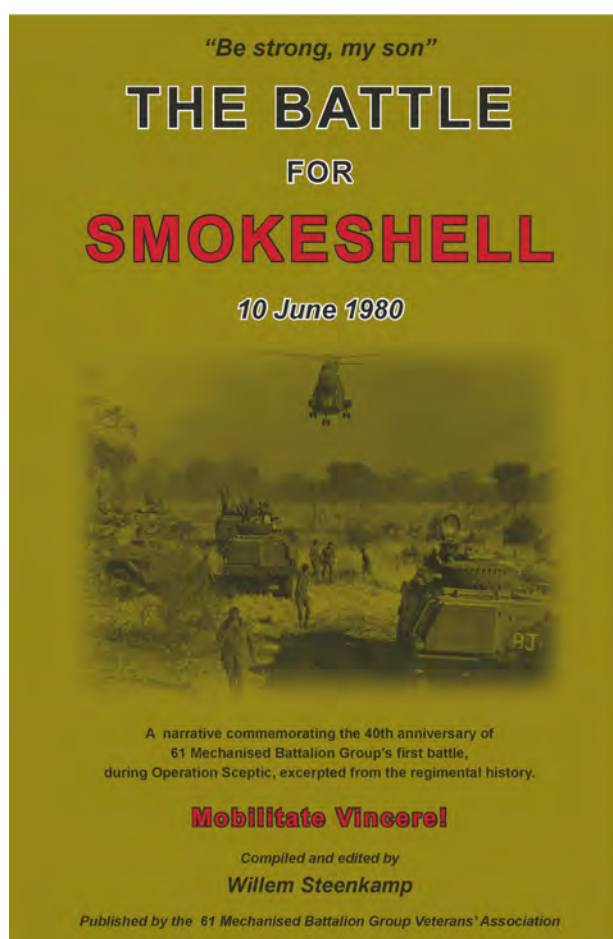
We salute our brothers in arms who we had once fought against, those who are now our friends. Our thoughts forever remain with the civilians who were hurt. Lest we forget! I truly hope that history will not repeat itself and that it will not be necessary to make war once again to achieve peace!

Plettenberg Bay

31 May 2018



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Hybrid War Beyond Lebanon: Lessons from the South African Campaign 1976 to 1989

Maj Sean J. McWilliams (07-05-2009)

The largest conventional engagement of the South African campaign was the battle of Cuito Cuanavalle. Fought from September 1987 to March 1988, the campaign shifted from irregular warfare, to conventional warfare, to a combination of the two, and then back to a primarily conventional siege. The RSA involvement began as an attempt to relieve pressure on UNITA forces caused by the largest combined Angola Cuban offensive to date.

Approximately five thousand South African troops in support of its UNITA ally against upwards of forty thousand Cuban and Angola troops. RSA mechanized units destroyed Cuban and Angolan armored columns while South African Special Forces tied down SWAPO and Cuban reserves. UNITA forces augmented by RSA advisors and artillery supported the main effort and provided critical infantry forces for the assault. In terms of statistical losses and operational effects the battle seems clearly to have been a victory for South Africa. The combined Angolan Cuban offensive against UNITA was halted and communist forces suffered high casualties in men and equipment for little loss on life by the South Africans.

However, the Angolan and Cubans were able to claim victory because thought they had not won militarily, they were able to survive to continue the conflict and obtain considerable informational advantages.

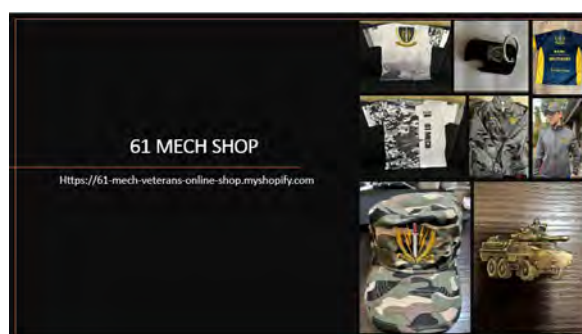
The fact that the Angolans and the Cubans held Cuito Canavalle, regardless of whether the RSA actually wanted to occupy the town was portrayed as a communist victory. The repulse of South African attacks and the subsequent statement was seen as a loss of prestige for the RSA.¹¹¹ Cuban and Angola informa-

tion operations downplayed their own losses. Nelson Mandela later remarked that, — The decisive defeat of the racist army in Cuito Canavalle was a victory for all Africa.¹¹² The view that Cuito Cuanavalle was ‘Apartheid’s Stalingrad’ was repeated so often in the press that it became the accepted truth.¹¹³ South Africa information

operations could not overcome this perception and influence world opinion. Its press representatives often reverted to an attrition-based approach to explain its successes to domestic and international audiences.

The stalled situation around Cuito Cuanavalle forced a decision on the part of the RSA. To complete the destruction of Angolan and Cuban troops in Cuito Cuanavalle the RSA would have to increase its financial commitment and forces in Southern Angola. This in turn would increase the likelihood of RSA casualties was politically unacceptable. As Alan Cowell explains, —support for a black ally could not and would not be financed by white South African casualties beyond a low threshold because white opinion at home would not tolerate it.¹¹⁸ If the RSA leadership was unwilling to increase its troop commitment RSA would have to settle for the damage they had inflicted on their opponents and the limited territorial gains they and UNITA had made up to this point. An air raid by Cuban fighter-bombers that killed twelve RSA conscripts in 1988 had a galvanizing effect on RSA opinion makers.¹¹⁹ The South African leadership chose to withdrawal its forces.

Despite the uncertain victory at Cuito Cuanavalle, the RSA was still able to use the battle to achieve a strategic goal of a timeline for the withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola. South Africa despite winning the conventional and irregular military campaign against both domestic and external insurgencies, the RSA did not obtain its strategic goals. The RSA is a case of winning battles but losing the war because of the inability to convert physical success into cognitive and moral success.



Article 5

Gerhard J. J. Oosthuizen. (Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns. September 2017)

Agtergrond

Hierdie artikel fokus op die derde en laaste SAW-UNITA-aanval op Tumpo en op die aanspraak van kolonel Jan Breytenbach, oud-bevelvoerder 32 Bataljon, dat “By early the next morning [23 March 1988] they had driven the 25th Brigade from their positions and taken Tumpu. This clearly demonstrated that well planned, well led and well coordinated night [attacks] by well trained infantry seldom fail.” Die Breytenbach-aanspraak is egter nie uniek nie en is deur verskeie belanghebbende persone ondersteun.

Die twee mislukte pogings om Tumpo te verower het ’n demoraliserende effek op die betrokke SAW-eenhede gehad. Die SAW-leierselement het gevolglik verskeie ontlontingpogings aangewend om die “persepsie onder eimagte dat ons verloor het op Tumpo weens die terugtrekking” in die kiem te smoor. Ook die kapelane het opdrag ontvang om tydens bidparades die “verloor-persepsie” ten sterkste te beveg. Die aanspraak van die SAW leierselement dat dié pogings besonder effektief was, hou egter nie water nie.

Die taak om ’n derde poging aan te wend om Tumpo te verower, sou deur elemente van burgermageenhede, 32 Bataljon en vier UNITA-infanteriebatalljons onder bevel van 82 Suid-Afrikaanse Gemeganiseerde (82 SA Meg Bde) Brigade aangepak word. Die betrokke burgermageenhede was Regiment Mooirivier, Regiment President Steyn, Regiment De la Rey, Regiment Groot Karoo, Regiment Potchefstroom Universiteit, 44 Valskerm Brigade, 13 Veldgenieregiment, 19 Vuurpylregiment en 7 Lugafweerregiment. Die maksimum aantal UNITA infanteriste moes aan die aanval deelneem, hoofsaaklik om vuur te trek, teikens vas te stel en die SAW-verliese tot die minimum te beperk.

Hewige reënstorms met gepaardgaande oorstromings het die beweging van sekere eenhede gekortwiek. Só het Regiment Mooirivier byvoorbeeld op 20 Februarie 1988 per bus na 7 Divisie Mobilisasiesentrum te Bloemfontein vertrek. Kaptein Japie Venter en luitenant Kobus Taljaardt het die inklaringsproses in ’n sopnat Bloemfontein hanteer. Gedurende die mobilisasiefase het dit so gereën dat sommige tente knediep onder water was en ander inmekaargestort het. In oorlog met die personeel van 7 Mobilisasiesentrum is

een voertuigloods ontruim sodat die manskappe ten minste droog kon slaap.

Die magte het teen die middel van Maart aan die front gearriveer en daar is dadelik met finale voorbereidings en afronding vir die derde aanslag op Tumpo begin. Toenemende internasionale druk om uit Angola te onttrek, het verdere druk op die voorbereidings en afhandeling van Operasie Packer geplaas. Ter regverdiging van die voortgesette stryd het die SAW vyf redes aan die deelnemende leierskorps en troepe verskaf: Die MPLA is onwettig in Angola aan bewind; Angola word as hegte basis deur die USSR gebruik om teen die Republiek van Suid-Afrika (RSA) en SWA te veg; die USSR ondersteun die MPLA/FAPLA en die ANC; en UNITA dien as ’n bufferstrook vir aanvalle teen SWA en daarom veg die RSA indirek vir UNITA en direk vir die RSA. Dit het ook die geleentheid aan die SAW gegee om nuwe krygstuig op die proef te stel. Troepe is gewaarsku teen swak dissipline, gerugte, die vyandelike lugoormag en die hoë ongevalle weens geelsug en malaria. Geelsug was aansteeklik en daarom was persoonlike higiëne van uiterste belang en moes malariapille ook gereeld gedrink word.

OORGANGSFASE

Die oorgangs- en onderhandelingsfase tussen Operasie Hooper en Packer, 2 tot 12 Maart 1988, is gekenmerk deur SAW-kwelaksies (onder andere steekaanvalle en kwelvuuraksies) teen die FAPLA-magte. Futiele grondskreeu-inisiatiewe, ondersteun deur die SAW-artillerie, is ook geloods. Só is die FAPLA-magte byvoorbeeld in Portugees gedreig: “Verlaat julle stellings en gaan na die wesoewer of staar die dood in die gesig.” UNITA is ook effektief by kwelaksies betrek vóór die aanbreek van D-dag. Die ontruimde stellings van 59 FAPLA-Brigade is deur UNITA beset om te voorkom dat eersgenoemde dit weer inneem. UNITA het verder ook die logistieke FAPLA-konvooi aangeval. UNITA-magte is getaak om mynvelde op te spoor en onskadelik te stel. Teen 10 Maart het 4 Regular Bataljon van UNITA reeds sowat 200 myne opgespoor. Kompanies van 32 Bataljon is op 10 Maart ontplooi in die Chaminga-hoogland om uiteindelik met elemente van Regiment Groot

Karoo te hergroepeer vir 'n misleidingsaanval op Tumpo vanuit die suidooste. Vyandelike tussenaksies het onder andere lugdominerende behels. Op 17 en 18 Maart was hulle besonder bedrywig in pogings om SAW-UNITA-posisies op te spoor en aan te val. Op 17 Maart het 'n aantal Angolese Mig-aanvalsvliegtuie 'n SAWkonvooi aangeval, maar die SAW-artillerie het voortgegaan met volgehoue treiteraksies. 'n Artillerie-fopstelling is deur die SAW ingerig om die vyandelike lugmag uit te lok om dit aan te val en laag genoeg oor die gebied te vlieg sodat die MiGs bestook kon word.

20 Suid-Afrikaanse Gemeganiseerde Brigade (20 SA Meg Bde) het oor die tydperk 11 tot 14 Maart 1988 na die demobiliseringsgebied onttrek. Op 12 Maart het 82 SA Meg Bde aan die front gearriveer. Die volgende dag het die oorhandiging en oornamen tussen 20 SA Meg Bde en 82 SA Meg Bde plaasgevind. Dieselfde dag het 20 SA Meg Bde Hoofkwartierstasie en -personeel na Rundu vertrek en is Operasie Hooper formeel afgehandel. Die taktiese hoofkwartier van 82 SA Meg Bde, onder bevel van kolonel Paul Fouché, het dadelik met die beplanning van die derde aanval op Tumpo begin. Die Bevelvoerende Generaal Suidwes-Afrika Gebiedsmag, generaal-majoor Willie Meyer, het beklemtoon dat die D-dag so gou doenlik, verkieslik in die omgewing van 20-22 Maart, moes plaasvind: Eerstens het die gesloerdery die FAPLA-magte bevoordeel aangesien hulle meer tyd gehad het om vir die aanval voor te berei deur onder andere die verbetering van verdedigingsstellings. Daarbenewens kon die onsekere binnelandse en internasionale klimaat daartoe bydra dat die SAW moes onttrek voor die afhandeling van die taak.

BEPLANNING EN ONDERHANDELING MET UNITA

Die opdrag aan 82 SA Meg Bde (Opso 1/88) het behels om, in samewerking met UNITA, die vyandelike magte oos van Cuito-rivier te vernietig of na die westekant van die Cuito-rivier te verdryf teen 20 Maart 1988. 82 SA Meg Bde het dus voor die uitdaging te staan gekom om te slaag waar 20 SA Meg Bde misluk het. Die beperkende faktore vir SAW-UNITA-magte was egter steeds dieselfde, terwyl die voordele en gunstige faktore vir FAPLA en die Kubane ook grotendeels onveranderd gebly het.

Die FAPLA-bondgenote was slag gereed om die derde Suid-Afrikaanse aanslag op Tumpo die hoof te bied.

Dié magte was ingegrawe in "oorwoë verdedigings-telsels" en stewige bunkers het effektiewe beskerming gebied teen lugaanvalle en artilleriebombardement. Boonop het die besondere kenmerke van die terrein en topografie die verdediging van Tumpo vergemaklik. Versterkings en logistieke voorsiening kon Tumpo met relatiewe gemak bereik. Verder is FAPLA enorm bevoordeel deur lugdominerende en gevolglik is die SAW-UNITA-bondgenote op vele terreine daardeur beperk. FAPLA het met behulp van Russiese en Kubaanse raadgevers intensief gebruik gemaak van mynvelde om sodoende enige aanval op Tumpo te kanaliseer. SAW-UNITA-bondgenote is byvoorbeeld gedwing om vanaf die noorde of noordweste of uit die suide aan te val. 82 SA Meg Bde het dus te make gehad met 'n gedugte vyand, wie se moreel bowendien versterk is deur die twee mislukte SAW-UNITA-aanvalle op Tumpo. Die FAPLA bondgenote was vasberade om enige aanslag met alles tot hulle beskikking teen te gaan.

Een van die grootste SAW-belemmering was uiters delikate logistieke probleme. Só byvoorbeeld was slegs vyf drywers teen 15 Maart beskikbaar en versoeke na Hoofkwartier Sektor 20 het niks opgelewer nie. Verskeie voertuie kon dus nie benut word nie en is daar gevolglik van lugvervoer gebruik gemaak om die situasie te beredder.¹⁶ Bydraende faktore wat 'n groot invloed op die effektiwiteit van die logistieke steunstelsel uitgeoefen het, was enersyds die swak toestand van die hooftoegangsroetes en andersyds die groot afstande tussen die derdelyne en tweedelyne logistieke installasies. Die afstand vanaf Pretoria na Grootfontein was byvoorbeeld 'n allemintige 2 268 km per pad, 2 829 km per spoor en 1 243 km per lug. Boonop het die vyandelike lugoormag die logistieke steunstelsel erg gekortwiek. Daar moes van nagbeweging gebruik gemaak word, wat 'n groot invloed uitgeoefen het op die beplanning, voorbereiding en tydsreëlings vir die lewering van kommoditeite. Daarbenewens het die nagbeweging oor uiters moeilike terrein, die lang afstande en swak roete-aanduiding tot gevolg gehad dat voertuie verdwaal het. Dit het heelwat vertragingsteweeg gebring met die lewering van kommoditeite. Die spoed van konvoie is ook aansienlik verminder, terwyl die kwesbaarheid van konvoie vergroot is aangesien spoordisipline in talryke gevalle weens die swak roetes prysgegee moes word.

UNITA is ook effektief by die beplanning betrek om hulle aandeel voor en tydens die operasie te finaliseer. Reeds op 6 Maart het samesprekings tussen

die twee bondgenote plaasgevind en is besluit dat UNITA 'n skakeloffisier by 32 Bataljon sou plaas om die bataljon se operasies in die Anhara Lipanda, 'n bykans boomlose vlakte, ten opsigte van UNITA se ontplooiings te koördineer. Die 18 Semi Regular Bataljon van UNITA sou uit die gebied onttrek word en 5 Regular Bataljon moes in 59 Fapla-Brigade se ontruimde stellings ontplooi word. Op 10 Maart om 1300B het die 82 SA Meg Bde se beplanningstaf en 'n UNITA-afvaardiging onder leiding van ene kolonel Seta begin met die beplanning vir die derde aanslag op Tumpo.

Die gevegsontwerp het die volgende behels:

“Fase 1: Eerste lig [misleidings]aanval deur 32 Bn op vy[andelike] stellings suid van Tumpo” en “Fase 2: Aanval deur pantser swaar mag op die vy[andelike] brughoof by Tumpo langs die noordelike toegangsweg. Gelyktydig met hierdie aanval moet UNITA wes van die rivier vy[andelike] stellings N en S aanval.” Die volgende dag is die operasionele plan vir die Tumpo-aanval aan alle betrokke SAW-stawwe en ook aan die UNITA-afvaardiging aangebied. Die plan is deur brigadebevelvoerder kolonel Paul Fouché noodgedwonge aanvaar en 'n tevrede UNITA-afvaardiging het daarmee akkoord gegaan om hulle aksies, soos vervat in die plan, uit te voer.

Tydens die vergadering van 17 Maart is ontplooiing voor en op D-dag weereens intensief deur die bondgenote bespreek. Die SAW aanvalsplan, soortgelyk aan die tweede mislukte Tumpo-aanval (1 Maart 1988), het egter nie die ondersteuning van kolonel Paul Fouché en kommandant Gerhard Louw geniet nie. Hulle was albei onder andere besonder ontevrede om 'n nuwe aanval langs dieselfde roete te onderneem en was van oordeel dat die beperkte Tumpo-gebied nie geskik was vir aanvalle uit verskillende rigtings nie. Generaal Kat (André) Liebenberg het hulle egter beveel om voort te gaan.

Die burgermagenhede het vroeg in Maart by die Brigade Administratiewe Gebied (BAG) aangekom en het daarvandaan na die opleidingsgebiede vertrek. Later het hulle na hul versamelgebiede beweeg. Die eerste groep wat deel was van die omruiling van troepe, was 'n 120 mm mortierbatterie, wat op 5 Maart aan die front gearriveer het. Enkele dae later het Regiment Mooirivier ook na die opleidingsgebied beweeg, waar Regimente De la Rey en Groot Karoo reeds ontplooi was. Nadat die nodige proviand en

watervoorraad ontvang is, het hulle verby die BAG beweeg. Regiment Mooirivier het kamp opgeslaan langs 'n shona, sowat 800 meter van die hoof-logistieke roete na die front. Dié burgermagenheid het op 10 Maart die heel eerste kontak tydens Operasie Packer gemaak. Die manskappe het die geleentheid gehad om hulle klere te was en hulle wapens slag-gereed te maak. Twee MiGs het skielik oor hulle gevlieg, omgedraai en reguit na hulle inbeweeg. Die betrokke lede van Regiment Mooirivier was vas daarvan oortuig dat die vliegtuie inbeweeg het om die finale slag te slaan, maar wonder bo wonder is nie 'n enkele skoot afgevuur nie en het die vliegtuie weer verdwyn. Die “aanval”, so ver oos van Cuito Cuanavale, was 'n sekere aanduiding dat die FAPLA-lugmag bereid was om aanvalle tot so ver suidoos as Mavinga te onderneem.

Kort daarna het Regiment Mooirivier gehawende pantserkarre ontvang, waarvan sommige nie eens oor 'n toringluik beskik het nie. Die voertuie is gevolglik na die BAG geneem vir broodnodige herstelwerk. Die burgermagenhede en ongeveer 240 UNITA-infanteriste (laasgenoemde onder bevel van ene luitenant Ventura) het teen middel-Maart vir kernbelangrike opleiding aangemeld. Gedurende die kort en ontoereikende periode van 18 tot 22 Maart het hulle gesamentlike opleiding ter voorbereiding van Operasie Packer ontvang. Een van die opleidingsdae is opgeskort weens 'n gebrek aan diesel. Die opleidingsgeleenthede vir lede van die burgermagenhede was egter onvoldoende, onder andere as gevolg van die beperkte tyd voor D-dag en logistieke probleme. Kolonel A. Fourie was byvoorbeeld die mening toegedaan dat die burgermagenhede 'n geweldige agterstand gehad het, omdat hulle “nie jaarliks tov gesofistikeerde uitrusting opleiding ondergaan nie”. Hulle was goed in die statiese rol maar hulle effektiwiteit in die meer mobiele situasie is as ontoereikend beskou. Die burgermagenhede se leiersgroep se paraatheid en “verroeste” ervaring was veral 'n groot bron van kommer vir die SAW-leierskorps.

Op 14 Maart het kommandant Gerhard Louw van die SAW-gevegskool gevolglik oorgeneem as veggroepbevelvoerder, waarskynlik op grond van sy meerdere ervaring en omdat die aangewese Burgermag-bevelvoerder se huis oorstrom het en hy inderhaas moes terugkeer huis toe. Kommandant Boet Schoeman van die Regiment De la Rey was sy tweede-in-bevel. Na afloop van Operasie Packer is

die bevelstruktuur terugverander soos dit was voor Louw bevel oorgeneem het. Die wisseling van bevel ten gunste van permanente SAW-lede het bitterheid by burgermagbevelvoerders veroorsaak. Dit was vir hulle 'n klinkklare bewys dat hulle vermoëns bevestigraagteken is. Daarbenewens is burgermaglede van onskatbare operasionele ondervinding ontnem. In 'n seinberig van 8 Maart 1988 is alreeds onomwonde verklaar: "Tov die mag wat agterbly [na voltooiing van Operasie Packer] moet dit verkieslik uit 32 BN [Bataljon] of 101 BN kom met, waar nodig, NDP [Nasionale Diensplig] spesialiste en nie uit burgermaggelede nie."

Die patroon om na 'n aanval te onttrek en sodoende aan die vyand die kans te gee om te herstel en om selfs hulle posisie te versterk, is ongelukkig noodgedwonge voortgesit. Daar is ook voortgegaan met die praktyk om nie die korrekte genie-stawwe, indien enige, by die onderskeie formasiehoofkwartiere te plaas nie. Genie-insette tydens die gesamentlike beplanning was ontoereikend en genie-beplanning op die onderskeie formasie- en eenheidsvlakke het nie daadwerklik vanaf die aanvang van die beplanningsproses deel uitgemaak van die betrokke beplanningsgroep nie. Dit was veral die gebrek aan genie-stafoffisiere by formasie en eenheidhoofkwartiere wat daartoe gelei het dat beplanning, koördinerings en bevel en beheer nie na wense uitgevoer is nie.

Betroubare inligting speel 'n primêre rol tydens enige konvensionele operasie. Baie van die suksesse wat tydens vorige operasies behaal is, was onder andere te danke aan goeie inligting, maar heel dikwels was van die grootste frustrasies te wyte aan veral onbetroubare UNITA-inligting. Tydens vorige operasies en veral Operasie Packer moes veggroepe dikwels aanvalle uitvoer op teikens waarvoor onvoldoende inligting beskikbaar was. Volgens UNITA inligtingsbronne was 'n Kubaanse regiment wes van die samevloeiing van die Cuito- en Cuanavale-rivier ontplooi en was verdere Kubaanse versterkings vanaf Menongwe na Cuito Cuanavale onderweg. UNITA as inligtingsbron is egter tereg beskryf as "...vaag, veroudend en 'n bron van verwarring". Die Suid-Afrikaanse Lugmag (SALM) is ernstig aan bande gelê deur die bykans onophoudelike lugverkenning van die FAPLA-lugmag oor die front. Aanvalle deur die SALM op die FAPLA-verdedigingstellings op 20 en 21 Maart het byvoorbeeld nie veel vermag nie. Die FAPLA-luggoormag was so deurslaggewend dat die beplande aandkerkdien van 18 Maart afgelas is as gevolg van

MiG-aktiwiteite.

4. D-DAG, 23 MAART 1988

Die hoofaanvalsmag, onder aanvoering van kommandant Gerhard Louw, het onder andere bestaan uit Regiment President Steyn (24 Olifanttenks), Regiment Mooirivier (Ratel 90-eskadron) en twee gemeganiseerde infanteriebataljons van Regimente De la Rey en Groot Karoo. Daarbenewens het verskeie UNITA-bataljons dié aanvalsmag versterk. 82 SA Meg Bde was op 22 Maart "slag gereed" vir die derde aanval op Tumpo. Aanvanklik het alles seepglad verloop. Die eerste voorspan van Regiment De la Rey het reeds om 0600B na hulle versamelgebied beweeg en die beweging van die hoofaanvalsmag en Regiment Groot Karoo het ook volgens plan verloop. Daarbenewens het die taktiese bevelvoerder, kolonel Paul Fouché, en die taktiese hoofkwartier op 01:30 (D-dag) die hoë terrein noord van die Chambling-arivier bereik om daarvandaan die aanval te beheer. Die skynaanval deur 32 Bataljon en elemente van Regiment Groot Karoo het die opstelling van 'n fopbrughoof suid van Cuito Cuanavale behels. Die FAPLA-bondgenote het hulle egter weinig daaraan gesteur en bykans alle fokus toegespits op die aankomende hoofaanvalsmag, wat vanuit die noordooste die aanval geloods het.

Om 21:00 dieselfde nag is met die aanmars na Tumpo begin. 'n Klein gloeistafie was onderaan elke voertuig gemonteer om die nagbeweging te vergemaklik. Die nagbeweging het egter rampspoedig begin aangesien die verkenners, wat ook as gidse opgetree het, die pad byster geraak het. Die voorste tenks het gevolglik verdwaal en op die agterste tenks afgepyl. In 'n poging om die chaos onder beheer te bring, het die tenks lank staties gebly. 'n Ander faktor wat die aanmars erg aan bande gelê het en veroorsaak het dat heelwat tyd verspil is, was 'n stuk hoë grond met sanderige steil hellings, bekend as "heart break hill". Die tenks het met relatiewe gemak die hindernis baasgeraak, maar verskeie Ratels het vasgeval en moes met die tenkherwinningsvoertuig uitgesleep word. Boonop is die UNITA-soldate wat reeds vir 'n paar dae strategiese hoë grond beset het om geskikte observasieposte vir SAW-artillerie te vestig, deur FAPLA-magte verdryf tydens die SAW-UNITA-aanmars. Daarbenewens het die SAW artillerie verskeie voertuigprobleme ondervind. As gevolg van hierdie faktore het die aanvalsmag nie beskik oor die noodsaaklike artillerie-observasieposte nie, en die artillerievuur op die doelwit

was gevolglik ondoeltreffend en onakkuraat.

Kort na 07:30 het een van die voertuie wat 'n tenk-roller vervoer het, omgeslaan. Met slegs een oorblywende tenkroller tot die aanvalsmag se beskikking om die mynvelde te bres, het beweging heelwat stadiger plaasgevind. Die FAPLA-magte het die SAW-bondgenote boonop met artillerie bestook en hoewel dit onakkuraat was, het dit nogtans groot gevaar ingehou vir die infanterie wat die pad voor die voertuie moes vee. Die hoofaanvalsmag het stadig vorentoe beweeg, terwyl die artillerie voor bombardemente op die teiken geloods het. Met die bereiking van die afmarslyn om 08:15 was twee G5-kanonne ook ondiensbaar, weens meganiese probleme. Die aanvalsmag het te ver wes beweeg en het hulle byna op die rand van die Cuito-rivier se vloedvlakte bevind. 'n Uitgestrekte mynveld moes toe getrotseer word met slegs een mynroller tot hulle beskikking. Die gevaar van teentenkmyn was gevolglik baie groot en om 08:35 het een van die SAW-tenks 'n teentenkmyn en twee personeelmyne afgetrap. Die beskadigde en onbruikbare tenk is deur die herwinningspanne herwin. Die SAW-artillerie het om 08:40 met 'n ondersteuningsvuurplan begin, want die SAW-tenks was voor die mynveld en FAPLA-artillerie het op hulle gefokus. Sowat tien minute later het die SAW-aanvalsmag by die mynveld vasgeval. Tevergeefse pogings is aangewend om met twee plofadders die mynveld te bres. Pogings om die myne met behulp van springstof te detoneer, was ook onsuksesvol. FAPLA-tenks het om 10:07 vanaf die wesoewer op die aanvalsmag gevuur. Kort daarna het die SAW-tenks die vuur beantwoord en in die proses een tenk vernietig. Die SAW-bombardement was so geslaagd dat daar skielik geen vuur op die aanvalsmag neergebring is nie.

UNITA se 66 en 75 Regular Bataljons het intussen soos beplan met hulle aanval wes van die Cuito-rivier (Bambi-gebied) voortgegaan. Die FAPLA-magte het UNITA egter met BM 21-vuur gekonfronteer en UNITA kon bloedweinig uitrig. Die hoofaanvalsmag het uit radeloosheid probeer om die plofadders met Ratel-masjiengeweevuur te detoneer. Dit het ook misluk want in die proses het een Ratel 'n landmyn afgetrap. Kommandant Louw het gevolglik besluit om voortaan gebruik te maak van die mynroller, gevolg deur die tenks, om 'n bres in die mynveld te slaan. Met die mynroller is sodanige sukses behaal dat een tenk-eskadron teen 12:00 reeds deur die mynveld begin beweeg het. In reaksie hierop het die FAPLA-magte

hewige vuur op die SAW-voertuie neergebring. Teen 12:30 het een tenkeskadron reeds deur die mynveld beweeg. Die SAW het egter sulke hewige vuur getrek dat kommandant Louw besluit het om na dooie grond terug te beweeg. UNITA-troepe wat bo-op die tenks ontplooi was, het swaar verliese gely. Boonop het die FAPLA-magte begin om 23 mm-lugafweerkannone in te span, wat vanaf die oostelike flank begin vuur het.

Die voorste eskadron het teen 12:45 weer beweeg, maar het onmiddellik hewige artillerievuur, veral vanaf die wesoewer, ondervind. Die vuur was so hewig dat die aanvalsmag eenvoudig nie vorentoe kon beweeg nie. Boonop was die vasgepende aanvalsmag in groot gevaar toe die MiGs teen 13:30 bokant hulle bedrywig begin raak het. Die aanvalsmag was egter vasberade om ondanks die hewige artillerievuur en die moontlikheid van 'n lugaanval vorentoe te beweeg. Weens onbetroubare UNITA-inligtingsbronne was die aanvalsmag nie bewus van die tweede mynveld nie, en om 13:46 het hulle in dié mynveld vasgery. Twee SAW-tenks is geïmmobiliseer weens beskadigde veerstelsels. In daardie stadium het FAPLA-mortiere orals tussen die SAW-tenks geval, wat die sig tot die minimum beperk het. Groot onsekerheid het geheers oor waar die mynveld was, en of dit myne of mortiere was wat tussen hulle ontplof het. Die SAW se artillerievermoë is nadelig beïnvloed deur die reën en mis, aangesien waarneming op die front en doelwit daardeur bemoeilik is. Daarenteen het die FAPLA-magte ondanks die swak sig die aanvalsmag met akkurate en vernietigende vuur effektief verhoed om verder as die tweede mynveld te vorder.

Kommandant Louw het om 13:48 gerapporteer dat die dieselvakkies so laag was dat die gevaar bestaan het dat die aanvalsmag nie die voorversamelgebied sou kon bereik nie. Sy voorstel dat die aanvalsmag lievers moes onttrek, het aanvanklik op dowe ore geval. Kort na dié versoek is 'n derde tenk so beskadig dat dit ondiensbaar was. Teen 14:00 het die aanvalsmag deur die tweede mynveld beweeg. Die FAPLA-vuur was besonder hewig. Kolonel Fouché het daarom opdrag gegee dat daar na die omgewing van die eerste mynveld onttrek moes word en dat die tenks terselfdertyd herwin moes word. Om 14:05 is die aanvalsmag beveel om na die voorversamelgebied te onttrek. Tydens die onttrekking het MiGs vanuit die suide die aanvalsmag aangeval. Geen verliese is egter gely nie aangesien al die bomme van teiken af was. Die terugtrekking het daarna sonder verdere voorvalle voortgegaan. Die beskadigde tenks moes egter op

die slagveld agtergelaat word weens hewige FAP-LA-vuur. Louw en Fouché wou die tenks met artillerievuur vernietig, maar is deur 'n onnadenkende Kat Liebenberg verbied. Hy het beveel dat die tenks later herwin kon word. Die dag na afloop van Operasie Packer het 'n verkenningsspan egter die futiele opdrag gekry om die drie SAW-tenks te vernietig.

Kolonel Fouché en sy senior kollegas het teen 18:39 besluit dat daar na die taktiese hoofkwartiergebied terugbeweeg moes word. Terselfdertyd het die onderskeie SAW-magte na hulle aangewese versamelgebiede vertrek. Verdere optrede sou bepaal word tydens die nabetragting van die operasie. UNITA is betrek by die beplanningsaksies en generaal Demostinos het onder meer op 25 en 26 Maart met kolonel Fouché vergader om te besluit oor gesamentlike optrede.

Ronald Dreyer vertolk tereg die onttrekkingversoek en -bevel as volg: "The South African commander asked for permission '... to break off the attack', a euphemism for acknowledging military defeat." Kolonel Fouché het nogtans die gedemoraliseerde veggroep hartlik bedank vir die taak wat hulle verrig het. Hy het hulle bemoedig deur onder andere te beweer "... die boere het nie verloor nie. Sy stawwe is alreeds besig om weer te beplan." Enkele dae later (29 Maart) het die veggroepbevelvoerder egter die opdrag gekry om teen 8 April 1988 te onttrek. Die SAW-UNITA-troepe se moreel het 'n laagtepunt bereik na die derde mislukte poging. Na die suksesvolle verdediging van Tumpo en die buit van drie SAW-tenks, was die FAPLA moreel daarenteen op 'n besondere hoogtepunt. Die tenks wat deur die SAW agtergelaat is, het sterk propaganda-waarde vir die FAPLA-magte gebied. Een van die tenks is na 25 Bataljon se stellings gesleep terwyl die ander deur stellings beskerm is om te verhoed dat die SAW-magte dit bereik. Buitelandse joernaliste is selfs ingevlieg om die SAW-tenks te besigtig. Daarbenewens is van grondskreeu-apparaat gebruik gemaak om wyd en syd te verkondig dat die drie tenks in FAPLA-hande is en dat een Afrikaanssprekende SAW-soldaat gevange geneem is.

Die SAW het, net soos in vorige operasies, nie die belangrikheid van sielkundige ontlasting besef nie. Heelwat getraumatiseerde SAW-soldate het aan post-traumatische stres gely, wat 'n demper geplaas het op hulle lewenslus. UNITA het ernstige personeelverliese gely, veral onder die troepe wat saam met die tenks beweeg het. Daarbenewens het heelwat soldate van die twee UNITA-bataljons wat op die wesower

aangeval het, gesneuwel. Daarteenoor het die SAW-magte geen verliese gely nie.

Die oogmerk om SAW-verliese tot die minimum te beperk deur die maksimale aanwending van UNITA-troepe is dus met ongekende sukses bekroon. Terwyl die nabetragting aan die gang was, het albei vyandelike groepe kwelaksies uitgevoer. Die SAW het voortgegaan met artilleriebestokings op strategiese en geleentheidsteikens. Die volgehoue teistering van die SAW-UNITA-magte deur die MiGs het veroorsaak dat die SAW-artillerie nie doeltreffend kon voortgaan met bestokings nie. Die FAPLA-magte het ook inderhaas Cuito Cuanavale se verdediging verskerp. Hulle was van oordeel dat die SAW-UNITA-magte met die volgende aanval op dié teiken sou fokus. Daar is byvoorbeeld 49 tenks op die oosoewer ontplooi en nuwe stellings is ingerig vir SAM-grond-tot-lug-missiele, tenks en 23 mm-kanonne langs die pad vanaf Sabiano na Cuito Cuanavale. Teen die einde van Maart het die eerste eenhede wat aan Operasie Packer deelgeneem het, begin terugkeer na hulle basisse. Tot en met die finale onttrekking van die Suid-Afrikaanse magte in April 1989 is die status quo gehandhaaf, wat as 'n skaakmatsituasie beskryf kan word. Die Kubane en Russe het egter daarop aanspraak gemaak dat hulle betrokkenheid in Angola gelei het tot die "forced withdrawal" van die SAW uit Angola, veral na die "military defeats of March-June 1988." Die Angolese bondgenote was boonop verkeerdelik van oordeel dat die SAW Cuito Cuanavale wou verower en dat die Angolese bondgenote die sogenaamde "Slag van Cuito Cuanavale" gewen het.

Intussen was die vredesamesprekings tussen belanghebbende partye goed op koers. Verteenwoordigers van Suid-Afrika, Kuba en Angola het op 22 Augustus 1988 'n wapenstilstandsooreenkoms gesluit te Ruacana in Suidwes-Afrika (Namibië). Voortgesette onderhandelinge het daartoe gelei dat die implementering van resolusie 435 en die onttrekking van die Suid-Afrikaanse magte uit Suidwes-Afrika goedgekeur is. Laasgenoemde ooreenkoms moes vanaf 1 April 1989 tot en met die onafhanklikwording van Suidwes-Afrika geïmplementeer word. 'n Verdere ooreenkoms tussen Kuba en Angola het die onttrekking van Kubaanse magte binne 27 maande uit Angola behels. Die ooreenkomste het die weg gebaan vir 'n vreedsame afsluiting van die sogenaamde Suidwes-kwessie.

TEN SLOTTE

Die derde aanval op Tumpo was 'n volslae mislukking.

Die SAW-magte is deur hewige vuur vasgepen en so verhoed om enige vyandelike doelwitte te verower. Weens die reën en mis was daar aanvanklik nie 'n MiG-lugbedreiging nie, en die FAPLA-magte het die SAW-aanval afgeweer sonder om enige fisiese kontak te maak.

'n Logistieke stelsel moet met die aanvang van enige operasie gevestig word om eskalasie te hanteer, maar in hierdie geval is geen oorwoë logistieke stelsel gevestig of aangepas om bestaande knelpunte te hanteer nie. In plaas daarvan is die logistieke stelsel op 'n ad hoc-basis ontwikkel en is dit regdeur die operasie op 'n krisisbasis bedryf. Regiment Mooirivier het byvoorbeeld gehawende voertuie ontvang wat inderhaas herstel moes word, en twee G5-kanonne van die hoofaanvalsmag het weens meganiese probleme onbruikbaar geword. 'n Nypende dieselte kort het ook veroorsaak dat een dag van die reeds ontoereikende vyfdag opleidings geleentheid van die burgermagineenhede opgeskort moes word. Tot oormaat van ramp moes die hoofaanvalsmag weens onder andere lae dieselvlakke onttrek.

Die plofadders is, net soos in voorafgaande operasies, onsuksesvol aangewend om die mynvelde vinnig en veilig te bres.

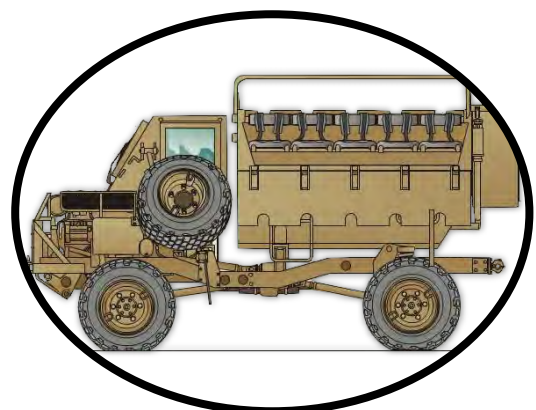
Slegs vyf dae is gereserveer vir die voorbereiding en opleiding van burgermagineenhede, en een van daardie vyf dae moes bowendien opgeskort word weens die ernstige dieselte kort.

Dié ongewenste toedrag van sake het spanning veroorsaak, wat vererger is deur die openlike wantroue wat staandemagoffisiere geopenbaar het in die konvensionele vermoëns van die burgermagineenhede, deur onder andere sommige burgermagbevelvoerders met staandemaglede te vervang. Gegewe die beperkte kontak, kon die staandemagbevelvoerders voorts ook nie 'n doeltreffende vertrouensverhouding met lede van die burgermagineenhede opbou nie. Die toedrag van sake het bygedra tot die negatiewe uitkoms van die derde aanslag op Tumpo.

Gebrekkige intelligensie het ook 'n dodelike impak

op die derde aanval gehad. Die UNITA-inligting was onbetroubaar en boonop het die SAW-verkenningselemente ook verskeie “inligtingstiltes” ervaar. Albei was byvoorbeeld totaal onbewus van die tweede mynveld, met katastrofale gevolge. Daarbenewens het veral UNITA-gidse soms op uiters kritieke tye weens gebrekkige kennis van die terrein en tydens nagbeweging totaal die spoor byster geraak. Dit het bygedra tot tydverspilling, onsekerheid en spanning. Die Breytenbach-aanspraak dat Tumpo tydens die derde probeerslag verower is en dat daardeur onomwonde gedemonstreer is dat goed beplande, effektiewe aanvoering en deeglik gekoördineerde nagaanvalle deur goed opgeleide infanteriste selde misluk, is derhalwe van alle waarheid ontbloot. Dit was buitendien nie 'n nagaanval nie, maar het helder oordag plaasgevind. Die derde aanval op Tumpo op 23 Maart 1988 kan sonder vrees vir teenspraak as 'n klaaglike mislukking beskou word.

Verskeie faktore het die derde aanslag op Tumpo gekelder: 'n Gebrek aan kreatiewe denke, deur bykans dieselfde aanvalsplan en aanmarslyn van die mislukte tweede Tumpo-aanval te herhaal ('n fatale taktiese flater en strydig met algemeen geldende aanvalstrategieë); die gebrek aan 'n oorwoë logistieke stelsel (byvoorbeeld die tekort aan diesel en meganiese paraatheid van voertuie en toerusting); deeglik verskafte en toegeruste FAPLA-magte; ontoereikende intelligensie (veral betreffende die tweede mynveld); bykans onbegaanbare sanderige en digboste terrein; onbemande observasieposte; bykans totaal ontoereikende voorbereiding en opleiding van burgermagineenhede; die gespanne en gebrekkige vertrouensverhouding tussen burgermagineenhede en SAW-staandemagoffisiere; en internasionale druk om uit Angola te onttrek.



61 Mech Township Deployment



In South Africa, SADF soldiers are respected for their war effort in Southwest Africa/Namibia and Angola.

But there was another war; a war much closer to home, a war few people in the white community knew about. It was a war for votes, for election in the first democratic election in 1994. It raged for years in the so-called townships.

It was ferocious, it was brutal, it was at times: vulgar, it was an atrocity against human beings...

And in the midst of it, eighteen to nineteen year old military conscripts were deployed to ensure a peaceful transition. These were Niel Bruwer's Toy Soldiers. Young men, straight out of school, rushed through military training, and deployed.

Padre Fanus Hansen (61 Mech)

Editors Note

For those who deployed in the Townships the scope of Township and Hostel violence is clear. However, to the majority of veterans who never deployed into the townships it is not. As orientation to Niel Bruwer's experience covered in the main part of this article the following summary is offered.

Durban Hostels And Political Violence: Case Studies In Kwamashu And Umlazi - Paulus Zulu (Transformation 1993).

Spatial Problems

Both the Umlazi and the Kwa Mashu hostels present specific problems of space and administration. Physically they are spread out such that policing, unlike in the other hostels, is problematic. There are official entry points into each hostel but because of the vast perimeters strangers can enter from any direction with very little chances of being detected. The attacks on the Umlazi hostel allegedly by residents in informal settlements are facilitated by this spatial problem. Similarly, migrants can go in and out of the hostels to attack surrounding communities without being noticed. The vastness of the territory on which the hostels stand has also meant that it has been relatively easier to site informal housing in between the units. This has not only made the hostels very ugly in appearance, it has also contributed to the competition for scarce resources both within and from without the hostels. Within the hostels, residents in the shacks draw water from the hostel blocks and in a number of instances have electrically connected their shacks to the main blocks. This has potential for conflict as officially shack owners do not pay rent. This suggests that they are preying on the registered tenants for resources or that they pay unofficial rent to the regis-

tered tenants. They are thus either exploiting or being exploited by the situation. In both instances the position is hardly compatible with orderly societal norms and augurs badly for effective control.

Political Problems

Developments in the hostels in general demonstrate that the hostels have become contested terrains where the battle for political space is being waged. The Kwa Mashu and the Umlazi hostels are effectively situated such that this contest is exacerbated. In the first place they are located within the administration of Kwa Zulu and de facto are perceived by Inkatha as its territorial space. This has constrained political choices for the inhabitants of the two hostels. In areas controlled by Kwa Zulu, in practice, only Inkatha and no other political party is allowed to exist. This has created such tensions that the conflict between the hostels and the surrounding communities, and within the hostels themselves, can be partly attributed to this. Secondly, because of their isolation and spatial location, the two hostels have become easy prey for political manipulators for violence. Allegations that the two hostels have become hiding dens for arms caches abound, and have turned out to be extremely difficult to verify mainly because the police force is perceptibly partisan. This does not augur well for the progress to peace within a violence-infested region.

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It is evident that the hostels have the potential to, if they actually have not, become centres of violence against political enemies. Sociological conditions, ie the social organisation of the hostels, marginalisation and alienation, predispose hostels to mobilisation and consequently violence on the slightest signs of provocation. It is not that hostel dwellers are inherently aggressive, but that the social conditions that they live under make them easy prey to political manipulation. Given the role of the Kwa Zulu police in the political conflict in the region, hostels that fall within their jurisdiction will remain problematic and a security risk not only to the surrounding communities but to themselves as well.

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Umlazi

Part 2

Working with 32 Bn
March 2023 Issue

***By
Niel Bruwer***



Two stripes on my sleeve. We were ready for war! Remember at the end of 1989, war in Angola was still a reality. I was chosen to join 61 Mechanised Battalion in Northern Namibia and maybe Angola. Call it youthful stupidity but I was actually looking forward to it. This is what we were trained for. 61 Mechanised Battalion was the ultimate in warfare with huge successes in Angola. Everybody knew about them and everyone wanted to join them. I think it is safe to call them one of the top fighting units in the world at the time.

But I was not destined for war in Angola. Two weeks before we left for 61 Mech the war was ended. Part of me was relieved but by far the greater part of me felt cheated! A full year of hectic pain and suffering and for what? But we were still destined for 61 Mech and a few weeks after we received our rank we flew up to Walvisbay to join my new family. I was so proud. War or no war, I was about to join an elite fighting unit. And I was not disappointed.

The war in Angola was officially over. Hardly a month into my new life at 61 Mech it was announced that we could all go on a month's holiday.

Unbeknown to me at the time the Townships in South Africa were burning. Black South Africans had had enough of the Nationalist Party's bullying. It was time for another war.



Umlazi

Just outside Durban lies one of the fourth largest townships in South Africa by the name of Umlazi. It was huge with many thousands of inhabitants, most of them pissed off with the Apartheid Government. And of course they saw it as their duty to take it out on us.

The resistance movements in these townships were very well organised. There were a couple of different movements, but by far the best organised were the ANC's Self Defence Units (SDU's) and the Inkata Freedom Party's youth soldiers. They were relatively well trained at causing shit. The best way to describe them is to think of a very pissed off neighbourhood watch. They were all over and of course knew the area very well.

Then of course there were just the good old criminals. Unlike the resistance movements, these guys just exploited the violence for their own agenda. These were criminals that would rape, plunder and murder and claimed that they did it in the name of "The Struggle". I would say that they were by far the most dangerous. These were the guys that we liked to hunt down. They were everywhere and very hard to identify because remember the rest of the people lived in fear of them. Just being seen talking to a SADF member could result in your house being burned to the ground. We had to be very discreet in getting information.

One of the biggest challenges was the language barrier. The language spoken in Umlazi was Zulu. Now remember we were from all over South Africa and very few of us could speak Zulu let alone understand it. So it was decided that every night we would pick up a Zulu Policeman (ZP). Most of them were useless dagga smokers and pissed out of their minds most of the time. But rules were rules and we had to pick them up every night before we would enter the Township. So we normally just made them sit in the Caspir and told them to shut up or even better to sleep it off. We would wake them when we needed something translated and even then I think they cocked around because after a long conversation we would have even less information than before.

I clearly remember the first day we entered Umlazi in a long convoy of about one hundred Caspirs. Bit of a show of force. Sort of letting the little fuckers know

we are in the area and we have the arsenal to deal with every little trick they could throw at us.

Umlazi is scary to enter. It is like entering another level of an Online War Game. At the entrance of Umlazi is the infamous Umlazi Hostels. This was meant to be male only Hostels, but of course they organised themselves a few, what can only be called sex slaves, for the odd sexual urge. We even rescued a drugged up white teen girl there one night. How she got there and why she could not leave I will never know. What I do remember is that the same night we took her to Addington Hospital she tried to commit suicide. Who knows what happened there? But over the next few years we saw many heartbroken stories like that.

Entering Umlazi for the first time as a Platoon Commander I was in charge of four Caspirs. Me in the front and then three other Caspirs, commanded by section leaders right behind me. The Caspirs had a tower where the vehicle Commander would stand, pretty exposed. We were trained for this, but call me a sissy boy, I was shitting myself. This was the real deal! So big deal, I thought out loudly, you want to go to war? Let's see if you have it in you. Now for those of you who were troops, when the Corporal looked all brave and agro the reality is that he was just a scared little boy who wanted to go back home and cuddle up in front of the TV with his mommy serving him milk and cookies! You learn to bullshit like a pro that way!

Remember, they taught us that in Leadership Training. Always look like you're in control even though you don't know what the hell to do! Also never look lost, pretend you just wanted to see what went on in the area you were now lost in. The day before they took few of us up in the air over Umlazi in a little four seater aeroplane called a Bosbok. From the air it looked beautiful. Kwa Zulu Natal is beautiful from the air with its rolling green hills. Now I wished I'd paid attention instead of spending the entire flight looking at the blue ocean.

How do you get lost while driving in a convoy? Easy, you miss one robot and things turn upside down. Yip, Platoon commander Niel Bruwer in his brand new Caspir got lost and it took us an hour to catch up with the rest of the convoy. Very embarrassing and in front of the other experienced 61 Mech Platoon Commanders. Anyway, it was almost worth it. During our little detour we stopped to get directions from a

group of little boys. They were all very excited when they saw the brand new Caspirs. One little boy pointed his finger at us and said, "Heybo, this car can ride on its roof!" This puzzled us at first and then we got it. At the back of the Caspirs two spare wheels were mounted giving the Caspir the look of a space aged vehicle that indeed looked like it can drive on its roof! These boys laughed excitedly and danced around us. The innocence of little children.

But over the next couple of months I got to know Umlazi like the palm of my hand. We got to know the twisted and narrow little streets so well, that every now and then, we were called upon to take delegates through the township. We loved doing this, proudly standing in the towers of our vehicles while the delegates and their wives sat inside crapping themselves. On one such occasion they asked me to take a group of overseas cameramen with us. We had such fun with them, telling them war stories and basically lying to them. Everything from black witch doctors who can turn you into a tokolosh, to rumours of a white slave camp inside the township

Umlazi had a certain vibe to it. You can't exactly call it a positive vibe. But there was something about the place that makes you want to go back and show your son all the spots. One such spot was J-section. The most notorious neighbourhood in Umlazi. And it was run by a thug by the name of Janibezwe. Real warlord type of guy and probably the cruellest person I've ever dealt with. He had the habit of cutting the stomach's of pregnant ladies open and by doing that killing them. At first I thought he was an urban legend so horrible the stories were. But he was real and for months him and I played a game of hide and seek with each other. He was for the lack of a better word a real doos!

About fear. Fear is a bitch! Bastard thing that you can smell and even taste in your mouth. We are all scared of different things in life. One night in Umlazi I experienced fear like that. Stupid self caused fear. So here we go....

Like mentioned before, each night before we would leave on patrol, we had to first pick up a "kak sleg" Zulu Policeman (ZP). It was about eight o'clock when we pulled into the police station. Parked in front of the police station was a Private Security bakkie. Two Indian Security guards stood around it nervously. They were waiting for us. I walked over and they

started to tell me their story.

Every night, as part of their patrolling duty they had to stop at the gate of a power plant in Unit j, Umlazi. Every night these two guards were getting abused by the locals. All sorts of shit went on. Sometimes, when they were lucky they were just slapped around by the locals, robbed of money and cigarettes. Sometimes they were shot at. He He.... one night they were stripped of their clothes and made to walk back naked. But our Indian friend's boss, could not give a shit about them! They had to sign the roster at the gate. They were now gatvol! It was time for action to be taken.

The only thing they didn't want is to be the ones taking action. They wanted us to take it for them. Yes, you guessed right....we were super keen!

Army volunteer system. Let me explain. Before you ask for volunteers, you know who you want to volunteer. So you just keep asking for volunteers until the right people for the job put up their hands. This evening was no different. I explained the plan I had in mind, to the guys. "I am looking for three volunteers to come with me". This was serious adventure to an eighteen year old! Before I could even finish my request for volunteers the hands of Jung, Adams and Lionel Parker shot up.

Those were the guys I would have told to come with anyway. Just saved a lot of red tape by getting them to volunteer! But they were the right guys. Tuff 'sout-ies' and full of shit. Jung was a young farmer boy from Natal somewhere. A few months after this incident he got shot through his foot. We all stood around him joking and teasing him. The medic even allowed me to do the stitches. Jung just lay there, smiling at us. But whenever I needed them they had my back, so for this mission they were perfect.

My plan was very dangerous, bordering on insane. But I knew it would work. The security bakkie had a canvas canopy. The four of us would hide in the back of the bakkie and as our Indian friends drive to the power station we would get attacked. Like baiting them! We would then jump out and surprise the attackers. The Indian guys told us there were about fifty to a hundred of them per night. I knew I could at least half that number.

So off we go on the ten minute drive. Then it kicked

in.....what the hell am I doing? I did not have the authority to do this. This is freaking dangerous. Even the canopy is made out of canvass.....not exactly a bullet stopper. Then there were these young guys with me. I was responsible for their safety. Fear started to creep in. We were now away from the lit up area and safety of the police station. Our faces were painted black and for added effect we wrapped ourselves in blankets to look the part. I was very scared. Blood taste in the mouth type of scared. Wanted to piss in my pants type of scared. But at the same time I felt alive. In my mind this was going to be my first big one. And it was!

As we got closer to the power plant I could feel the fear in the back of the van. We were squashed in like sardines! Don't show fear! Do not show that you are also scared.....these thoughts went through my mind. Bang, bang, action. Two shots fired and within seconds we are out of the van, rolling in the grass. "Heads down!" I shouted to the guys. In the distance I could see the two Indian guys running in the direction we came from. They had enough; I think they started to see us as a major liability. We were going to get them killed.

The attacking mob was now throwing stones at us. This used to happen often in the townships. These little pockets of resistance only had a few rounds of ammunition with them. So as a show of force they would normally fire these two rounds into the air within the first two seconds of the ambush. But the thing is that you will never know. The rocks came flying. With a thumping noise a rock landed on the windscreen. Fucked! Headlights, fucked, bonnet, fucked, canvass canopytorn to pieces with spears and all sorts of flying apparel sticking out of it.

As they reached about ten meters from us I fired the first shot. Into the air. All three my men jumped up. Whoever they were, they turned around and ran like a group of ostriches on steroids. They did not expect this. The little bullies had their asses kicked. Funniest thing is that to this day they must believe that it was the two Indian guys who fought back.

Now, about those two Indian guys..... They made it to the police station where they told my second in command a much more 'Rambo' like version of what happened. He made a decision not to call HQ.....God Bless His Little Soul! If he did

I would still be sitting in Military Prison to this day. Instead he kept calm and came straight to us with four Caspirs and all the guys, including our Indian Friends. We did a quick survey and recce of the area. Not a soul in sight. Anyway, we had enough action for one night so we decided to head back home. Our shift for the evening was over.

How do you tell your boss what happened to a brand new bakkie? I don't know but I am sure our two friends came up with the right story because we would see them often after that evening. They actually became very handy to have around. For one, they now hero worshipped us. Also their mom's made the best chicken curry in the world and they would often send us up a fresh supply. Amazingly, enough for an entire platoon. Beautiful people. They lived on the edge of the Umlazi Township and were no strangers to violence. I think they felt safe with us around. But to be honest, as security guards they were useless. Having said that.....they knew stuff. For example both were fluent in Zulu and for the first time in months we could actually trust our interpreters.

The ZP's talked kak most of the time. They always had the Inkata Freedom Party agenda on their hearts. But the best of these two security guards were the fact that they had the keys to the safe in their head office. Why would that be handy? Well, that is where the illegal firearms that got confiscated in searches, at soccer matches were kept. Sometimes up to one hundred at a time. Back at base camp the pressure to find illegal guns became heavier and heavier. Our Commanding Officer introduced an incentive leave pass day, for the platoon with the most illegal firearm finds. And week after week we would win these competitions, often because we were the best, but mostly because we had access to the Security Firms safe.



No day in Umlazi was ever the same. The locals always came out with a new plan to keep things interesting. And every weekend there was a funeral of some high up political leader. And my dear reader, it is at these funerals that you learn what it's like to be scared. Fifty, sixty thousand pissed off people dancing around you, taunting you, spitting at you and the worst, looking at you with hatred in their eyes. The slightest provocation could turn these funerals into bloodbaths, leading to more funerals the next weekend. These marches were sad to see. But also beautiful. Energy in motion. Dancing in a pattern that oozes hatred of oppression. Everybody joined in. Four year olds and ninety year olds. Highly organised and disciplined. Chills would run down my spine. The All Blacks have the Haka.....what I would witness every Saturday morning was something much more blood chilling.....

While all this was happening we were still looking for Janibezwe. But no one really would tell us where to find him. Strange, he was the neighbourhood bully. I think people were so scared of him that they would lie to us about his whereabouts. I had some more information though. Apparently he had a huge burn scar around his neck. Legend had it that years ago a crowd tried to necklace him and that is where all the hatred came from. Still, my mission was to find him and make him pay for all the heartache he caused in Unit J, Umlazi.

Soon the Umlazi township were as familiar to me as the alleys of downtown Durban are to prostitutes. We knew every nook and cranny of this area. Umlazi intrigued me. As time went by I realized that I fell in love with its valleys and lush landscape. It was dangerous, yet addictive and the only township that I ever felt sad leaving. It had a personality. Monster by night and smoking victim during the day.

During this time the security police started to take note of us. They would continuously question us on areas of interest to them. They were on a completely different mission than us. They were chasing political radicals. I was still on my "let's find the AK 47" mission. But we were asked to escort them into areas at night, for their protection. This use to irritate me. It was a waste of my time. They always walked around like they owned the place. Self-appointed little James Bond's. They loved mass attended funerals and there-

fore we had to escort them to these grand finales.

Crowds would pour into sports stadiums by the tens of thousands. These gatherings were dangerous and very unpredictable. Imagine eighty thousand people crammed into a stadium. Every single black face is pissed off with you, you could see it, you could smell it, you could cut the air around you with a knife thick with emotion. Like a cloud, seconds before a storm! Anyone could carry a gun, and in fact, most of them carried some sort of firearm. In a crowd of tens of thousand, it is very difficult to spot a potential problem. We would be about two platoons, so plus minus 80 guys strong. Freaking intimidating....., but in an addictive way!

Watching eighty to one hundred thousand pissed off people doing their war dance around you was somewhat blood chilling. I can't even think of a movie scene to compare it to. However, here is the strange thing, as scary as it was, it was also beautiful. Energy in the air, the smell of fear and excitement in the Caspir. The earth vibrated around these crowds. Red dust would rise from the ground and clog your nostrils. The crowd would lift their legs and all at exactly the same split second stomp it down onto the ground. Black, sweaty and angry faces. These people had enough. They did not do this to get attention for a wage increase, they did this for their freedom.

It was breathtaking. Like a well-rehearsed play. If you dared to enter the crowd they would rip you to pieces. So from my point of view, it was better to just sit in the tower of the Caspir and try not to look scared.



Mike Burger was good at these “pretend not to be scared moments”. Except I believe that he really wasn’t scared. This guy was fearless. Sometimes it was border lined insanity! One Saturday morning, as we were attending one of these mass funerals it became evident to me.

This must have been the biggest gathering of people I ever saw in my life. Fifty thousand plus.....every single one of them ready to go to war! They were all dancing around us, pissed off and aggressive! Tens of Thousands of people. We could not believe our eyes. We were caught up in a horror scene which we did not choose to be part in. We all just sat there, hoping for the crowd to finally move on, when, there in the heat of the moment, I took a glimpse at the Caspir of my platoon commander, Mike Burger, sitting on the nose of the Caspir.....all exposed....having a Camel Light Cigarette. It would have made the coolest Camel cigarette ad ever!

And now those young boys were here. Scared, in a Caspir, and, let’s face it, which is nothing more than a pot of popcorn on the stove the minute a petrol bomb hits it. We weren’t canon fodder, we were like a wall of human bricks.....” jokers to the left....fools to the right.....and I’m stuck in the middle with you”!

Yes, that’s right. To the left, we had thousands of Inkatha Party members and to the right, we had ANC members, trying to get to each other, and chop each other to pieces. They would growl insult at each other. They would throw spears at each other and then, of course, they would shoot at each other. Good news is that they left us alone, and, as I said, we were only used as a wall to climb over. But there was one other



little task they trusted us with. We had to pick up the bodies of the dead and injured afterwards, which of course meant that there would be another funeral next Saturday.

On our way back to basecamp we liked to take the scenic route, which meant we could see the ocean. About ten km before one of these little trading stores / villages we could see the by the now familiar, black smoke of violence. Saturday afternoon fun in the townships - burn shit down! As we got closer to the burning building I could see the looters starting to make their way into it. The main shop on fire was a bottle store. As my very capable driver, can’t remember his surname, but a freaking legend of a Caspir driver was busy parking I saw a young guy with a crate of Black Label beer running towards the railway track. He obviously just stole it from the burning shop.

This was my moment! I was going to do something amazing. I was going to run the guy in and arrest him for looting. He was about my age, same slender build. He had a crate of beer, or maybe half a crate. Anyway, I had a heavy gun and even heavier bulletproof jacket. He had running tekkies and I had military boots..... do you see how I am trying to level us up? It was only the two of us on the railway line.....my troops thought it would be a good time to just sit and watch their corporal run.

After quite a while of running, I could see that I was slowly but surely catching up with him. One major problem, though, I reached the end of my stamina. A quick glance backwards confirmed my dismay, the fuckers are not even following. Useless bunch of troops!

I had 10 seconds of energy left and on impulse, I made a decision! Reckless decision. Against any military rule, but I did it. About two meters from him I swung my gun and threw it at his legs. It hit him right in the back of the knee and dropped him instantly. I was sitting on top of him, battling to breathe! A quick glance to where my gun was. He had roasties all over his body. I had roasties all over my body! And I did not even fall. Must have seen my ass somewhere and did not even realise it.

He did not try to get away. By now both of us decided quietly to just give up and let the other guy decide what to do! We were exhausted! We were just sitting

there, staring at each other. After a few minutes, he just got up, waved politely and walked away. I just let him.

I must say a Black Label never tasted so good!

Everything in Umlazi was going as planned by the evil dictators. The burning of property, the violence, the murders, basically everything that happened when we got there. The only change really was ourselves. We were now Township warfare, battle hardened soldiers. We had cuts and bruises, burns, broken legs(me), toes blown away(Yung) and most of all, the young boys that went in and came out all had a different look in their eyes. A tired look. A, "I want to go home look".....

As a platoon sergeant I now had great respect for my troops. I knew what they could do if they were put to the test. Loyal buggers to say the least! Naughty like normal teenagers should be....some of the boys were only 17 years old! But, at the same time there was a certain maturity about them. They would think nothing of it to wrestle and play like most boys their age and in the process creating havoc, but within seconds they could be ready for war. I was proud of them!

But as usual, there was a certain group that stood out head and shoulders above all the rest. These were the men of Platoon 2 in the second half of 1990.

Platoon 2....they came to me raw. Apparently they were the worst platoon during training. But once again, my theory of taking the "not so normal bunch" worked. If I remember right, this was the biggest amount of "Souties" I ever had in a platoon. There was this English speaking group of youngsters that stuck together through thick and thin. And very soon they became my main men. I will never forget the time we had our introduction the first night underneath a tree in our basecamp in Durban. I took an instant liking to these boys.

They just clicked immediately that needed to be done. Naughty fuckers though. But fortunately for me, I only found out most of the shit they were up to when they already left. But I am blessed to still have contact with a few of them. Parker, Adams, Holtzhausen, Yung and who ever I see from time to time. Paul Adams have a son the same age as mine and they are in the same grade at the same school. So we see each

other often enough.

I know I was a bastard as a Sergeant, yet whenever I speak to these guys only the good comes up. One incident I will never forget is the Road Block training we had by a high ranking Military Police member. He went on and on about how he once had a group that could set up an entire roadblock in about 4 minutes. We did it in 29 seconds. Yip.....an entire roadblock under half a minute! The Military Policeman came over to me, shook my hand and said..."Sergeant you now hold the South African record for fastest road block set up ever.

I could burst with pride....but then...I was only 19 years old. That night I received the biggest compliment ever.....Maj van Tuberg bought me a beer in the canteen. Maj van Tuberg, or Tubbies as he was known behind his back was a legend in 61 Mech. He was original from The Parachute Brigade. How the freaking hell he landed in 61 Mech I don't know. What I do know is that he was a legend. No one ever gave him any shit....and likewise, he would just get the job done without any huffing and puffing. Maj van Tuberg was a close to the real deal soldier as one could get. Him and Maj Smokey de Kock, Company Commander of Bravo Company must have been the coolest professional soldiers ever.



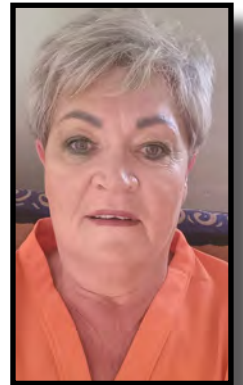
DIE YSTERVROU VAN 61 MEG

Elke siviele dame wat in 61 Meg gedien het gedurende die Tsumeb, Walvisbaai en Lohathla fases het n groot taak verrig. Hulle entoesisme was n inspirasie vir die eenheid. Indien jy iets gedoen wou hê dan kon jy net vra. Geen taak was te groot of te veel nie. As hulle nie tyd gehad het nie, dan het hulle tyd gemaak. VROU van STAAL! Dankie vir jul harde werk. Ek kon altyd op jul staat maak.

RSM J Kemp

Deur

**Lisby
van den Berg**



Die Tsumeb Fase

Om die rol van die vrou in 61 Meg tydens die Bosoorlog fase te verstaan moet mens die organisasie van die eenheid begryp. Die eenheid het bestaan uit twee verskillende hoofkwartiere sowat 120 km uit mekaar.

Die administratiewe deel was in Tsumeb gevestig. Dit was die plek waar al die boekwerk, logistiek, finansies ensovoorts behartig is. Tsumeb was ook die plek waar die staandemag staffede se gesinne gewoon het. Dit was nie in die "rooi" gebied nie. Hier het 'n aantal vroue die administrasie behartig. Sommige was die gades van hulle staandemag mans en ander soos ek wie se man nie in uniform was nie. Met die jare se verloop het die gesigte gewissel maar daar was n paar wat langer gedien het. So het ek vanaf 8 Julie 1985 tot 31 Maart 1995 by 61 Meg gewerk. Ons siviele dames was so deel van die eenheid dat ons as



een groot familie saamgewerk het. Die dagroetine op Tsumeb het vroeg begin. Die staandemag mans het daaglik deurgery na Omuthiya in die rooi gebied (120 km) vir hulle dagtaak. Dan weer elke aand terug na Tsumeb. Dit was natuurlik net wanneer die eenheid nie besig was met oefeninge en operasies nie. Dan was die mans vir dae, soms weke en soms maande weg van die huis. Dit was veral tydens sulke lang afwesigheid wat ons vroue meer heg was en mekaar ondersteun het. Soos een groot familie wat saam gestaan het. Ons het mekaar se lief en leed gedeel. Daar was moeilike dae, daar was goeie dae, hartseer dae, vrolike dae. Ek dink van die vrouens sal eerder daardie dae wil vergeet. Die kinders was nog almal klein en die veeleisende taak om pa en ma te speel het eise gestel.

Die dames het gesinsande by die menasie op Tsumeb gehou. Daar is die kinders besig gehou met speletjies en het die mammas later saam deelgeneem. Hierdie was verseker 'n geleentheid waar stoom afgeblaas kon word.





Die hoogtepunt was wanneer daar 'n radiogesprek of briefie uit Angola was. Daar was oor verrassings besoeke so dan en wan van die manne af. Was R en R genoem. Ek moes vervoer aangelê het vanaf Rundu tot by die huis in Tsumeb.. Daar was altyd 'n lafenis-sie vir die manne in die voertuig.

Die vrouens het uit die aard van die gebeure nie geweet as hul wederhelftes huis toe kom nie. Daar was gewoonlik briewe en groete gestuur uit Angola. Dit het somtyds gebeur dat van die vrouens nie briewe gekry het nie en dan baie hartseer was. Ek het dan maar huis toe gegaan en iets lekker gaan bak om te troos.



Die manne het gereeld versoeke gestuur van 'n ietsie lekkers en verfrissend van die huis af. Die vrouens het meester verpakkers geword, Daar is baie aartappelsakke met aartappels en 'n ietsie ekstra binne in versteek gestuur. Daar was tot ys vir een van die manne gestuur wat daai aand 'n lekker kouetjie geniet het.

Die troepe het nie pakkies ontvang nie en so het dit opgehoop by die poskantoor op Omuthiya. Ek het gevra dat daar kleinerige pakkies per kompanie en ook een per persoon ingebring word. Die is verpak in klerasiebokse en aan die bevelvoerder geadresseer. Deur hiedie optrede kon daar darem 'n paar troepe gelukkig gemaak word.

Tydens hierdie bosoerlog het Tsumeb se burgermeester "oom Hansie Hellwig" (RIV) hom baie oor die vrouens en kinders ontferm. Hy het gereeld 'n draai in die eenheid gemaak om te verneem of daar enige probleme by die huise is wat aandag moet kry. Hy het sover gegaan om 'n heerlike skaapbraai vir die vrouens en kinders te reël. Hy het gesorg dat die vrouens wat nie vervoer gehad het nie opgelaaai word. Daar was natuurlik ook die slegsê tye terwyl die manne geveg het. Ouers het gebel en wou antwoorde



hê. Ek het gewoonlik sulke oproepe gehanteer. My hart het uitgegaan na die moeders en meisies van die manne in die bos. Ek het maar die oproeper uitgehoor, al was hulle nie altyd redelik nie. Maar 'n bekommerde vrou dink mos nie aan redelikheid nie. Ek het maar hulle frustrasies geabsorbeer. Maar glo my as ek daai foon neergesit het het ek uiting aan my frustrasies gegee.

Dan was daar die hartseertye. Die berig dat daar lewensverlies was, was glad nie goed ontvang nie want dit was een van ons mense. Die oorledene se persoonlike besittings was dan van Omuthiya na Tsumeb gebring. Daar het ek dit ontvang. Dit moes dan verpak word en na Pers Ops in Pretoria aangestuur word. Hulle het dan gesorg dat dit aan die naasbestaandes oorhandig word. Dit was nie vir my maklik om so deur 'n persoon se persoonlike besittings te gaan nie. 'n Bondeltjie briewe, 'n foto, 'n dra radio, 'n sweetpak – alles dinge wat na aan die oorledene se hart gestaan het. Dit het amper gevoel of ek inbreuk maak op die persoon se privaatheid. Om so deur 'n persoon se persoonlike items te gaan was vir my erg. Iets wat my tot vandag toe nog bybly. Maar iemand moes dit doen. Die klere was nie almal gewas voor die oorledene vanaf Omuthiya vertrek nie. Dit het die persoon se reuk gedra. Ek weet nie of ek reg of verkeerd gedoen het nie, maar ek het altyd eers die klere gewas voor ek dit versend het. Dit het net vir my gevoel dat ek so die naasbestaandes se leed sou versag.

Met die terugkeer na die eenhied na afloop van die Operasies het die vroue en oom Hansie vir die manne by die karavaanpark in Tsumeb gewag. Dae voor die tyd was daar gebak en gebrou om vir die terugkerende manne verversings voor te berei. Daar het hulle 'n worsbroodjie, 'n soetigheidjie en lafenis gekry voordat



hulle die laaste 120km na Omuthiya aangepak het.

Die grootste opgewondenheid was toe die manne die laaste stretch van die roete aangedurf het. Dink Omuthiya was maar hul huis. Hulle het geweet, nie meer lank dan klim ons die Vlossie huis toe. Ek dink daar is 'n paar wat sal onthou hoe hulle 'n tipex

botteltjie agter die kop gekry het omdat hulle nie geluister het en uitgevind het op watter vliegtuig hulle huis toe gaan nie.

Daar was geen dames te Omuthiya nie. Dit was hier in 'n semi tentedorp waar die eenheid se meer as duisend soldate gewoon het. Om te verseker dat ons siviele dames deel bly van die eenheidskultuur was daar soms 'n daguitstappie, waarna ons altyd uitgesien het, na Omuthiya vir ons gereel.

Koeke

Kobus van Tonder

Vergun my wel die geleentheid om 'n stukkjie geskiedenis van 61Meg te vertel. Ek was predikant van die Gereformeerde Kerk op Tsumeb/Oshakati 1984-1990. Het soms eredienste en nagmaal vir Gereformeerdelidmate op Omuthiya bedien. AO Joe Lombaard was die ouderling wat dit gereël het. Komndt M Muller was bevelvoerder en OA Kemp RSM. My vrou het saam met die dames van Tsumeb gereël



om na 'n Operasie (Kan nie onthou watter een, watter jaar nie) aan almal koek te voorsien na hulle terugkoms. 400 koeke is die dag na Omuthiya gery. AO Lombaard se vrou, Adrisan het in die kantoor gewerk en was die kontak om die koek operasie te reël Ek stuur twee fotos van die geleentheid. My vrou Fina links met groen rok. Antoinette Strydom in die middel. Die ander dame kan ek nie onthou.

Wie nie die lewe van daardie jare beleef het nie sal nie verstaan as daar 'n nostalgie drang in jou kom.

Die Walvisbaai Fase

Tydens die implimentering van Res 435 in 1989 het die eenheid verhuis na Walvisbaai wat nog deel van die RSA was. Die groot trek het Oktober 1989 begin. Ons moes kantoor oppak en ook ons huise. My man het begin 1989 weer besluit om terug te keer na die staandemag. Dus het ek saam met die eenheid verhuis. Van die dames het egter agter gebly in Tsumeb en het by die polisie ingeskakel. Die meubels is gelaai en die groot trek het begin. Ons het ons huise wat van blik buite en die mooiste hout binne was betrek. Sommige lede het sementhuise gekry. Die vrouens en kinders het agter gebly en die manne is terug Omuthiya toe om die laaste uitrusting te gaan kry.



61 Meg Gp het bungalows in die Walvisbaai Militêre Gebied gekry waarin van die troepe tuis gegaan het wat moes help met die bemanning van die kantore wat ook bungalows was. Dit was ook 'n groot aanpassing om skielik saam met ander eenhede te werk. Groot baklei was natuurlik die aantal sitplekke op die vliegtuig. Grootfontein en die eenhede in Walvisbaai moes deel. Ek het baklei vir my getal plekke.

Ons het na Rooikop geskuif nadat die hele eenheid in gebied was. Die grootste uitdaging was natuurlik die telefoon kommunikasie. Daar was net 3 tot 4 fone. Verder het ons van die bostefoon gebruik gemaak om met die sub-eenhede te kommunikeer.

Ek was nou betrokke by die beweging van die troepe met die vlossie vanaf Rooikop. Hulle moes egter in siviele drag vlieg omrede die vliegtuig oor buurlande gevlieg het. Dit het ook sy uitdagings gehad want jy sal netjies geklee wees en nie geskeurde jeans aantrek nie. Min wetende dat dit die mode geword het vandag. So was daar een lid wat 'n flenter jean aangehad het en vining moes klere leen by sy makkers net om huis toe te kon gaan.



Walvisbaai is ook 'n plek waar jy al vier seisoene op een dag ervaar het. Ons kom uit die Noorde en hier ontmoet ons hierdie goor weer. Die oosweer was die ergste. Binne minute waai die wind en sand sewe soorte duiwels rond. Als is onder sand. Jy waag dit nie buite jou kantoor want dan is jou mond vol sand. Dit is die eerste en ek dink die enigste plek waar padskraapers die teerpad skraap.



Nog 'n uitdaging was natuurlik die maandelikse parade wat ons met sykouse en hoed moes bywoon. RSM Kemp het geen genade met ons betoon nie jy sal maar in die mis en koue sit tydens die parade. Gelukkig was dit net een keer per maand. Ons vergewe hom want dit was maar deel van die voorskrifte. Die voordeel van Walvisbaai was dat beide ouers by hul kinders se skoolaktiwiteite teenwoordig kon wees. Die tradisie van Vrydagaande bymekaarkom het ons voortgesit maar dit was nie soos dit in Omuthiya en Tsumeb was nie. Die manne het natuurlik ontpop as groot vissermanne. Ons weekend dames het ingeskaal by die dames van Walvisbaai Militêre Gebied en het ons een keer per maand saam gekuier. Hierdie was baie leersaam en het ons toere onderneem in die Walvisbaai enklawe. Die Topnaars en verskeie fabriek besoek.

Die Lohathla Fase

Die eenheid moes na 2 jr weer oppak en na die RSA verhuis. Ons het na Lohatlha verskuif. Die beplanning is gedoen en die groot trek is voortgesit. Daar is van trein, pad asook vliegtuie gebruik gemaak. Die families het Desember 1991 nadat die skole gesluit het verhuis. Die voorspanne het op Lohatlha reeds die eenheidsgebied en die gebied waar die eenheid gestasioneer sou word begin voorberei. Ons kantore op Lohatlha was karavane en die konferensiekamer/ teekamer was 'n tent. Later jare is daar 'n konferensiekamer gebou asook die Lomba 100 kroeg. Die gedenknaald is ook hier op Lohathla weer opgerig. Die eenheid het voortegaan met hul binne-landse ontplooiings en kursus steun. Dit is ook hier

op Lohatlha waar die lede van 32 Bn by ons aangesluit het. Dit was 'n voorreg om saam met hulle te kon werk. Jy is met respek behandel van die begin af en het ons deel van mekaar gevoel. Kol André en Kapt Appolinario het ons baie van die Portugese kultuur geleer. Wie sal dan ons "seun" Miaso (RIV) vergeet.

Lohatlha het ook sy eie uitdagings gehad. Die eenheid wat een groot familie was is opgebreek. Ons het die hele Kalahari vol gebly. Postmasburg, Glosam, Olifantshoek, Kathu en Klein Maremane. Die kinders van Klein Maremane en Glosam moes vroeg oggend bus klim vir skool in Postmasburg. Hulle het eers in die middag na 15:00 by die huis gekom. Die sportmanne en vroue onder hulle moes agterbly en dan met die Kleiner bussie huis toe kom. Die het later uitgeskerf want die bussie kon nie net vir 2 of 3 kinders ry nie. Ek dink die kinders is baie benadeel in die opsig. Ongelukkig het die sterk kultuur van 61 Meg Bn Gp as een groot familie hier op Lohatlha in my oë 'n stadige dood gesterf. Hier was NDP, OO, AO en Off kroeg. Dit het tot gevolg gehad dat daar slegs tydens eenheid funksies saam gekuier was.

My uurglas by 61 Meg Bn Gp het uitgeloopt. Ek is verplaas na Leërgevegskool en het Maart 1995 geskuif. Ek was bevoorreg om saam met Lt kol'e EB van Lill, Bok Smit, Mike Muller, Gerhard Louw en Hannes van der Merwe te werk. By elkeen van hulle het ek waardevolle lesse geleer wat ek vandag nog in my lewe toepas.

Dankie aan ieder en elk wat my pad in die 9 jaar 10 maande gekruis het wat ek deel van 61 Meg Bn Gp kon wees....



Dakota's, koeke, en 'n korporaal van 61 Meg Bataljon Groep - Korporaal Bets de Klerk, Bataljon HK, Tsumeb

Ek het op Tsumeb gewoon en het in 1972 by die kommando aangesluit, waar ek my opleiding gekry het. Of sal ek liewers sê my basies. Hier het ons geweet van die inval by Luanda, want ons kinders was op toer in Angola en hulle moes in die nag vlug oor die grens na Namibia. Daarna was die Roodt-moord op ons vriende se moeder en twee kinders 'n dogtertjie van vyf en 'n seuntjie van twee jaar, wat bitterheid in my hart veroorsaak het.

In Junie, toe Kommandant Dippenaar die aand op Tsumeb lughawe land, het ek besluit: 'vir hierdie manne moet iets gedoen word, want hulle is hier om ons te beskerm'. Ek het dadelik 'n paar van my vriendinne gebel en gesê maak "jaffles". Ek het pas van die kleinhoewe af gekom met 5 gallon melk, ek maak toe Milo en bak ook "jaffles" maar ek soek kwaliteit. Ons het dadelik aan die werk gespring en binne 'n kort tydjie was ons by die manne. Hulle was verras; al wat ek vir hulle kon sê was: "Ons kan nie vir julle lewens betaal nie, maar ons wil net vir julle wys ons is dankbaar". Nadat hulle geëet het, het ek gevra of daar enigiets was wat ons vir hulle kon doen.

Kommandant Dippenaar het gesê as hy net 'n warm bad kon kry; ek het hulle huis toe genooi sodat hulle kon bad; ek het ook van die manne se klere gewas. Dit was die valskermgroep, hulle was vir 'n paar dae daar op die lughawe; hulle het vir my die mooiste silwer bord gegee om dankie te sê. So het ons dames vir die troepe pannekoek-aande gereel, asook 'hotdog' en hamburgers, wat die manne baie geniet het.

Met die inwyding van Omuthiya het ek weer die dames gevra om te help, ons het baie koeke wat ons gebak, selfs Generaal Viljoen en sy vrou Ristie, het my en die dames persoonlik bedank vir alles wat ons vir die manne op die grens doen. Ek het dit my prioriteit gemaak om vir hulle 'n diens te lewer. So het Kommandant Dippenaar my oorgedra na Kommandant Roland de Vries, hy het my geërf, of hy my wou hê of nie. Hy het gevra of ek nie by 61 Meg wil aansluit nie, dan kan ek mos meer vir die manne beteken. Hy gee my toe 'n brief en reel 'n vlug na Pretoria en sê: "Gee hierdie brief vir Kommandant Christel Brand; ek weet nie wat die man in die brief geskryf het nie, maar ek het as 'n Korporaal teruggekom!

Wat 'n ondervinding!!! 'n Suid-Wester vir die



Jonie Bob e Dfn C. Smith
eerste keer in Pretoria op jou eie. Daar is vir my verblyf gereël van daar na Pointyns, van daar na Presas en van daar na Hallmark – wat 'n proses; maar ek het aangesluit.

Daar het my werk by 61 begin onder die bevel van Kommandant Roland de Vries; en net hier het Kommandant Roland se probleme begin.

Want vir my is gesê: "Net 'n Generaal en 'n Korporaal regeer die weermag". Dus het ek my mag gebruik.

Kommandant De Vries was nie net 'n bevelvoerder nie, maar 'n model van 'n mens met deernis vir sy offisiere sowel as vir sy troepe; ons het baie lief en leed gedeel. Maar laat ek nou nie die man so ophemel nie, netnou kry hy 'n grootkop.

Een keer het die man my geskel, hy was met 'n operasie in Angola en ek het besluit ek gaan die manne verras. Voortvarend soos ek is, gaan sit ek op sy stoel en bel Generaal Lloyd en sê ek wil 'n Dakota hê om vir die manne koek te neem. Die Generaal was taamlik onthuts en vra met wie praat hy nou, waarop ek antwoord: "Met hoofletters Korporaal De Klerk". Waarop hy antwoord: "Korporaaltjie weet jou bevelvoerder hiervan?" Ek vra toe heel astringent: "Moes hy hiervan geweet het?"

Hy vra my toe wie in bevel is; waarop ek antwoord: "Majoor Jakes Jacobs", en hy vra toe om met hom te praat; Majoor Jakes antwoord die Generaal "As sy iets doen, was dit nog altyd 'n groot sukses – gee maar vir haar 'n Dakota.

Generaal Lloyd vra toe wat die koeke sal weeg, ek antwoord dit is moeilik om te skat wat die koeke weeg seker 500 gr of 'n kg maar die wat die tien vrouens op hulle skote het kan ek nie sê nie.

Wie vir Kommandant De Vries gebel het, weet ek nie, maar die man was so kwaai soos hierdie miere met die dik agterlywe, (die troepe het vir hulle 'n naam gehad, maar ons het hulle B... byters genoem)

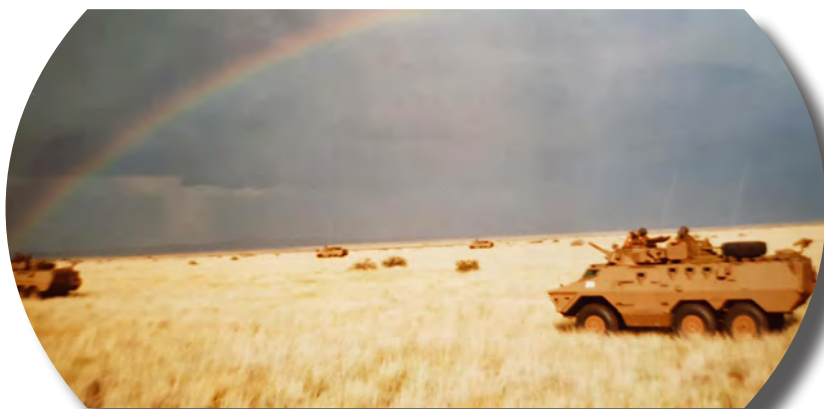
Kommandant De Vries kom op Omuthiya aan, maar vra: "Wat het jy nou aangevang, Generaal Geldenhuys bel my en vra, wat gaan in jou eenheid aan, Generaal Lloyd bel my en sê 'n Korporaal bel my en vra 'n Dakota om vir julle troepe koek te neem Angola toe; en dié man weet niks van sy Korporaal se planne nie.

Wat hy vir die Generaal gesê het, weet ek nie, maar die oggend toe ons met die koeke vertrek, het ek vir Kommandant De Vries gesê: "Sê net vir my mense

as ek nie lewend terugkom nie, is ek braaf die lewe uit". Sy antwoord was: "Sorg dat julle voor donker terug is, want die lughawe is donker met net vier paraffien lampe op die hoeke van die lughawe, om die vliegveld aan te dui".

Ongelukkig het 'n ander offisier 'n hartaanval gekry en hulle moes hom van Mpacha met 'n chopper gaan haal; en ons moes wag op Oshakati, want die offisier moes nog daardie nag 1 Mil-hospitaal toe gevlieg word; hy was ernstig siek. Dus kom ons eers na 10 uur die aand, op die donker lughawe aan met 'n baie ontstelde bevelvoerder wat op en af op die lughawe stap soos 'n volstruis mannetjie wat uit die kamp wil kom; al wat hy vir my gesê het was: "Bets jou donker!" Nadat ek verduidelik het, het die man afgekoel en ons het saam gaan koffie drink.

Nóú vertel die man my eers Genl Geldenhuys het vir hom gesê: "Met so inisiatief verdien sy 'n aanprysing van die hoof van die Leër, wat ek wel gekry het.



The Story of L/Cpl John McCrum - Bravo Company 1987

This is the recall of L/Cpl J McCrum who served in Platoon 6, Bravo Company, 1987. Only obvious spelling mistakes has been rectified. The original text was left intact as far as possible. The slight deviation from the real Modular story is also left unchanged.



My name is John McCrum. I was a Lance Corporal in the mechanised infantry, I did a years training at 1 SAI Bn and a year at 61 Mechanised Battalion Group

We flew into Grootfontein on 12 Dec 1987, climbed on Wit Olifants to Omutiya. At the turn off to 61 Mech several Corporals were there to meet us and made us run to camp - welcome to 61 Mech.

Christmas at 61, we had Christmas dinner with some decorations and alcohol. Otherwise it was pretty quiet.

Guys I'd spoken to before I arrived on the border told us stories of sun tanning, lazy days at the pool and nights in the pub with the occasional patrol thrown in. We didn't experience it like that. 61 Mech was one of the most paraat/disciplined units in the operational area, my first couple of weeks I sent letters home bitching about the discipline and inspections being worse than basics. This earned me a trip to the CO's office for my "negative" attitude and an "op-vok" from the company Sergeant Major.

The first couple of months was like being back in basics, we spent our first few weeks doing onderhoud/

maintenance around the base, PT and inspections including 'stalparade'.

Throughout January, Monday to Friday we spent doing mech infantry drills, Saturday was stalparade and if your inspection wasn't up to scratch it usually meant an 'op-vok' for a couple of hours. Sundays was washing day and a chance to do some letter writing and relax a bit. (90% of all the drills and exercise we did at 61 were with live ammo).

February we were sent to Oshivello to do Mot infantry training. Here we were given lectures on enemy weapons, mines, tactics as well as practical training in patrols, OP post, ambushes etc. it rained almost every day for the two weeks we were there, trying to keep weapons and equipment dry was a nightmare. Most of our time there was spent sleeping under a bivvy. Alpha Coy had one guy killed during training when a mag round hit him in the head.

After our Mot training we were deployed to the Ogandjera area to carry out Comops - Winning over the hearts and minds of the people – medics supplied some health services, we supplied some protection etc.

We accidentally rode through one of the kraals fences when our driver wasn't paying attention 61 had to pay the headman when he complained.

During one visit the guys from 23C found a bow and arrow in one of the kraals, one of guys used it to kill one of the chickens which we managed to hide. Later we cooked it up and ate it.

In South West most villages had a 'kuka shop' which usually supplies beer etc. During one patrol some of us were invited into the Kuka for a beer. Traditional native beer is call Mahangu made from Marulas. We sat on the floor of the hut with several locals, after handing over a couple of Rand, large clay pots of beer were passed around. I don't know how long we were in there but by the time we crawled out the Lt and the vehicles were on their way to pick us up. Wessie (David vd Westhuzen) threw up just as we were getting ready to mount up but he had to jump out when he realized he's lost his two false

teeth when he threw up. So we had to wait while he scratched in the dirt and vomit for his teeth! We were surprised & shit scared when the Major showed up and took some pictures so we had to act as sober as possible.

At the end of the Comops we took our 'talk /communicator' back to his 101Bn base at Ombalantu and spent the night camped outside the base. During the night there was a bit of fireworks as some 101Bn soldiers started firing on the local shops and each other due to some strife within the battalion, can't remember the cause.

From Ombalantu we headed to Ruacana to the hydro electric power scheme where we had a braai and a swim in the hippo and croc pools/river.

We spent the night at hurricane base and left the next morning, the night after we left the terrors launched a mortar attack on the base which killed and wounded a few troops at the base. We travelled to Ondangwa and spent the night and arrived back at Omuthiya the next day.

The next few weeks followed our usual routine, Mon-Fri - manoeuvres and combat drills. Sat - inspection and 'op-vok' Sun washing and rest. April we went on leave for two weeks we flew out of Grootfontein for Johannesburg/Jan Smuts.

Once we got back from leave it was back to our usual routine. Paydays at 61 were a bit of a mixed blessing, we had to queue for hours for peanuts and invariably we would somehow manage to piss off the Lt/S end up getting chased/jagged around 'the flagpole' +/- 2km away. We didn't usually need to buy too much



soap/toothpaste/razor etc whatever we didn't get in your care package from home. We tried to keep as much of our money as possible to buy booze at the tavern of the occasional meal at the 'steakhouse' a restaurant we had on the base, it was only open at certain times and difficult to get bookings.

Occasionally we'd get a day pass into Tsumeb (about 1 ½ hours drive from Omuthiya by Kwêvoël). That was an opportunity to draw more money, shop and swim at the pool. Drinking was a bit risky, if you went back to camp smelling of booze - that was big trouble!!

Every now and then the ammo store would clear out old ammo mortars, 40mm grenades, hand grenades, LMG, R5 rounds etc. these along with the various weapons would be loaded on to a truck and driven out to one of the firing ranges to be disposed of. That was fun.

Rob, 23C gunner and I were chosen to represent Sector 10 at the SWATF soccer tournament in Windhoek. This week was pretty much just a piss up, we played football all day and in the evening we headed to the nearest pub with a couple of trips into the night clubs of Windhoek, I spent my birthday in a nightclub absolutely legless. Before the start of one of our matches early in the morning the referee (a PF Officer) warned us if we arrived for a match again hung-over and reeking of alcohol we'd be banned from playing and put on report.

Back at base it was back to the usual routine. During an exercise in the Etosha pan we managed to flip our Ratel in a trench I ended up under a pile of browning rounds and managed to crawl out of the hatch.

We deployed on foot in the Ogongo area to do patrols and ambushes, we spent the night sleeping under the stars. When you weren't on guard duty you spooned with the other guys to try and keep warm as it was bitterly cold in the evenings in SWA.

We (BCoy) took a trip over the SWA/Angola border to visit a Unita base on the way back to Omuthiya, 22B was destroyed by a double cheese mine. A few of the guys were injured, a couple seriously.

One evening we were called out to Tsumeb, there was some rioting at the local mine so we stayed there for the day in case it escalated.

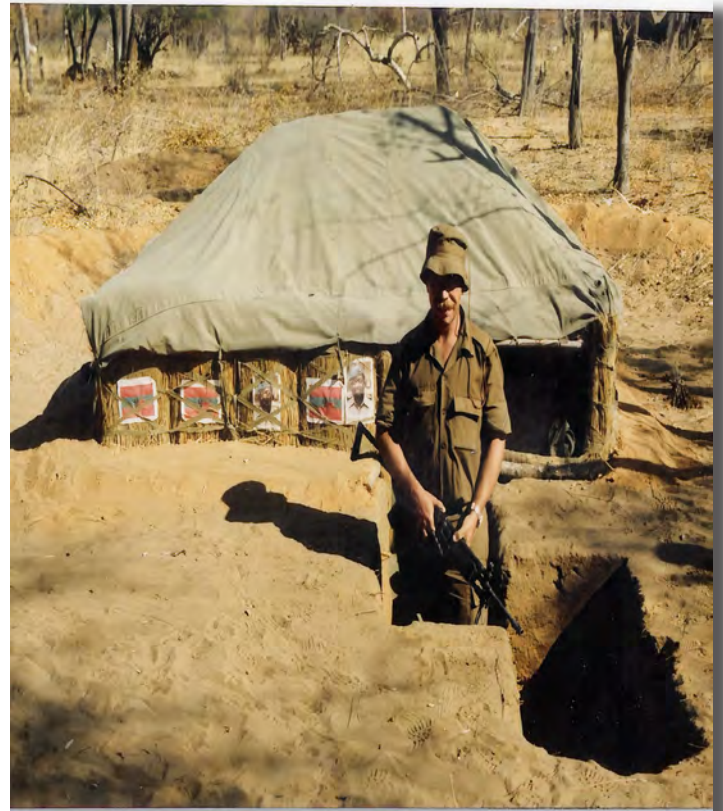
We deployed back into the bush on COIN OPS in the Etale area doing kraal searches on foot, observation posts, listening posts and ambushes, we took another trip across the Angolan border to visit the village of Santa Clara. From there we travelled to Ondangwa for the night and in the morning we went back to Omuthiya. Within two days we were on our way up to Rundu, where we spent a week doing combat drills and exercises after which we headed back to Omuthiya. Years later reading books on the Angolan conflict the purpose of 61's trips to Angolan border was to send a message to the Fapla and Cubans

Back at base we were given lectures on chemical warfare and enemy armour, we were then told our leave was cancelled with only 4 weeks to go. This made several hundred troops very unhappy especially me as I had just organized a ticket to see Status Quo and another band at Sun City which cost me a fortune.

After spending a couple of days in Rundu training we crossed the border into Angola on 31 August. Ops Modular had begun. We travelled north for a week driving during the day and pulling into a laager in the evenings. The going was very slow due to the thick sand which resulted in a lot of vehicles getting bogged, the sand also caused a lot of vehicles to breakdown due to clogged filters. The closer we got to the Lomba river we began travelling in the evenings and early morning, during those times due to mist and low light it made it difficult for the Migs to see us. During the day we would pull into a laager, camo the ratels and dig fox holes this became a regular occurrence during our time in Angola.

Regular visits from enemy Migs became a way of life for us for the next 3 months. The alls of "victor victor" usually meant there were enemy aircraft in the air and headed for us. Thanks to the Recces we had eyes on the airfields at Cuito Cuanavale and Menongue so we had plenty of warning. When we first started digging fox holes they were deep and well camouflaged. Towards the end we were so sick of digging they were barely a couple of feet deep for two guys would share the same foxhole (which was a 'no-no') the Mig bombing was so inaccurate we were seldom in much danger

During one "victor victor" alert we all jumped into our foxholes as usual; while squatting in my foxhole I suddenly felt something move under my bum. My



first thought was that a snake had crawled into my foxhole. I waited for what seemed like an eternity with this thing wriggling under my bum, when we got the all clear I called a couple of my mates and told them what I thought had happened. We devised a plan whereby they would pull and I would jump before it could strike, I've never moved so fast in my life!! When we looked into the foxhole it was just a frog, I got a bit stick for that for a while

During a contact between Fapla, 32 and 101 Bn at the old log. base a couple of vehicles were damaged Bravo Coy 61 Mech was tasked with recovering them. On the way our Ratel 23C broke down with a clogged fuel filter not far from the objective so we took no part in the recovery effort. During the attempt to recover the vehicles Bravo Coy were ambushed by Fapla forces. Artillery & mortar rounds from the subsequent contact began falling very close to our broken down Ratel which made for a very uncomfortable evening. We sat in the back of the Ratel listening to the battle unfold wishing we could get there to help out, several times we got Van (Steven vd Merwe) our driver to try and start the Ratel and get it going.

16th Sept 1987 was our first attempt to attack 47th Brigade, it was still dark when we got our orders - the next morning and moved out to our start line. There wasn't a lot of talk going on, we were all pretty nervous, we busied ourselves checking equipment loading magazines, filling our webbing with grenades,

water, magazines etc. I filled my combat jacket and chest webbing with as many magazines as I could; I used my chest webbing as a bullet proof vest. By the time I was finished I could barely lift up my webbing, I had to put it on the Ratel step to get it on, I estimate it must have weighted in the region of 25 – 30 kg. I didn't want to run out of Ammo or grenades during the fight.

On the way to the target area we stopped on the edge of a Shona to regroup and make sure everybody had kept up. Some of us took this opportunity to jump out have a smoke or grab a drink or catch up with buddies in other vehicles. Without warning two dark shapes appeared in the sky and pretty soon the call went up "victor victor" and everybody clambered back into their vehicles. The sound of the explosions were pretty loud accompanied by the sound of shrapnel ping-ing off the side of the Ratel. Fortunately nobody was injured and none of the vehicles were badly damaged, we found some marks on the side of our Ratel and the flap covering the water tap had been blown off.

Later on we were told it was actually two of our own Buccaneers who had mistaken us for a Fapla convoy. In our 'therapy' session with the 'koptiffies' in the transit camp after the operation, this more than any other incident was identified as the most traumatic of the entire campaign. We (Platoon 3) were on the right flank of the attack; we all sat quietly in the back of the Ratel in anticipation of the battle to come. Eventually after a couple of hours of slowly creeping through the thick Angolan bush the order eventually came 'Stop, Stapuit'. With this command, standard procedure was for the driver to open the pneumatically operated doors on either side of the Ratel and the troops to de-bus. But because the doors open so slowly I would undo the latch with one hand and hold it closed with



the other, once the pressure had built up in the door pneumatics, I would let the door go, the door would shoot open much faster. This gave the enemy less warning and less chance to take action.

After we'd de-bused we followed our training and began firing and moving, after about a kilometre in the hot late morning sun the weight of the heavy webbing began to take its toll, we'd stopped fire and move about 500m ago and had begun walking. I got Rob to open the Ratel door and I dumped the chest webbing inside, the Ratels were following behind the infantry, we in turn followed the anti-tank platoon. Leaves from the trees above my head began to flutter to the ground; small puffs of sand could be seen on the ground around us and above the shouts, radio traffic and explosion,

I could vaguely hear the 'crack & thump' of small arms fire. It wasn't until someone shouted 'contact' that I realised that we were being fired upon, we all hit the deck and began advancing via fire and move. Everything took on a dream like quality, I don't remember being afraid, our hours of training during the many exercises kicked in and we reacted as programmed. The attack hadn't gone as planned, we hadn't met the enemy head on we had gone in at an angle and our right flank had made contact with enemy first. Command were worried about a Fapla counter-attack around our flank, so our attack was halted so that we could withdraw and straighten up our line of advance.

With all the noise of the battle and the LMG group (Me, Oosie and Danie) being further away from the Corporal, we didn't hear the command to 'stuit en ontrek'. It was only when I looked around to see how the attack was progressing I noticed we were 50 – 100m in front of everybody else and they were withdrawing. We were still under enemy small arms and artillery fire. I don't remember feeling any panic S.O.P for withdrawing is fire and move in reverse. Once we had withdrawn far enough the Ratels were ordered forward to deliver fire to the front while we climbed in and pulled back. Because of the time (late afternoon) it was decided not to proceed with another attack and we withdrew to a laager several km's from the 47th brigade's position.

Being so far inside Angola logistics were a problem, fresh water in particular. One source of water was to dig in the Shona's close to the rivers, this was done

at night, a hole would be dug till we hit water, and this was then pumped into the water bunker along with a large helping of 'chlorfloc' (water purification tablets). This water was far from pure, the lower the level got in the bunker the muddier the water we were drinking. This led to a lot of case of 'gippo-guts'. I suffered for over a week with this condition, a bad case of the runs and severe stomach cramps, no matter what I ate or drank it went straight through me. Eventually I was passing stinking black water only and spent my days in the foetal position under the shade of the nearest tree too weak to move. The 'Tampax tiffies' had run out of medicine to treat me, all they had left was Imodium (konkryt pille). I ate these like smarties. As a result of the gippo guts, toilet paper was scarce (it became known as 'white gold')

Flies during the day and moths at night were in plague proportions. During the days everything was black with flies, any food or drink preparation invariably led to the food or drink liberally sprinkled with flies, in the beginning we would pick them out but towards the end they just got stirred into the mix. During the evenings fires were forbidden but on occasion we would ignore this if we were really hungry, the moths like the flies got stirred into the mix 'extra protein' yum!!

Food for our time in Angola consisted of rat packs, eating tins of corned beef, mince and noodles pickled fish, chocolate (tarzan bars) wore off real quick. We

began making 'section stews' everybody would pool their tins of food (except pickled and curried fish) cheesies and biscuits these would be cooked up in one pot and we'd all eat this. To this day I can't stand Pronutro, we ate it every day for 3 months. Super C's to me are now draughts pieces or chessmen, we would draw pictures of chess pieces on the Super C's and play chess or draughts. Rat pack tea was the most disgusting thing we'd ever tasted, no one drank it. We did receive some fresh vegetables (well almost fresh) and some meat, by the time it had travelled from Run-du to Manvinga by air and up to us via dirt track in a Kwêvoël it was covered in maggots. This didn't stop us, we cleaned the maggots off, cleaned the shovels we used for our 'boskak' and cooked the meat on an open fire as best we could, it tasted divine.

We moved out at 04h00 on 3rd Oct to take on 47 Brigade, it was 10h00 when we first made contact, again there wasn't a lot of talk and we listened to the progress of the battle over the radio in the Ratel. Bravo Coy were in reserve for the first assault, Alpha led the first wave, enemy mortar and artillery rounds were falling all around us the whole time. Migs were anticipated at the time as potentially being a massive problem however it failed to materialize and only flew a couple of sorties over our position. Early in the afternoon the attack was halted while Alpha coy fell back and Bravo coy took over the attack. We slowly moved forward waiting for the command we knew was coming.



I remember peering out the window looking for any signs of enemy movement, listening to the occasional round smack into the Ratel. We got a warning through the radio the enemy was using 23mm anti-aircraft guns an anti armour weapons, this scared the shit out to us. Out the window I could see the ground moving with the rounds kicking up puffs of sand. I wasn't looking forward to jumping out the safety of our armour plated sanctuary, when the command came there was no hesitation, nobody did, our training took over fire and move. Fapla was now in headlong retreat across the Lomba river flood plain, we reached the edge of the bush and looked out across the Shona, we could see hundreds of troops and dozens of vehicles making their way to the river. The thing that struck me the most was they didn't seem to be in a big hurry, we watched as the artillery fired round after round of G5 and MRL airburst, the troops in the Shona got less and less vehicles stopped and burst into flames. They were a fair distance away but that didn't

stop us taking potshots at them. Rob our gunner let loose with the 20mm but it jammed so he switched to the browning. After the attack we moved off the target area to a laager 30 km to the east.

Fear doesn't grip you during the battle, you're too busy doing what your trained to do, but afterwards in your sleeping bag at night once you had a chance to reflect on the days events and reflect what might have been that's when I was the most scared.

Our next attack was on the 17th October on 59th Brigade, Bravo coy was to lead the attack this time. The idea was to follow close behind 59th in their tracks through the thick bush and when they pulled into their position for the evening we would attack. Somehow they figured out what we were up to and instead of pulling into a laager they set an ambush for us with their tanks and anti-tank weapons. With the element of surprise gone and the thick bush making it impossible to see, plus the threat of Migs over our position it was decided to withdraw under artillery cover. We were pretty lucky,

I think Fapla got nervous and sprung their trap too soon had they waited till we got another couple of hundred meters closer they could have fired at us a point blank range. We couldn't see more than 30 – 50 meters in front of us and we did not even know they were there.

When we weren't attacking the Fapla brigades we took turns at escorting officers and NCO's scouting

for future laager positions or escorting supply, convoys, setting up OP posts or doing patrols to search for enemy observers or enemy patrols. We would also escort SA and Unita commanders to and from various bases or helicopter LZ's or escorting casevacs.

On one of our trips was to go and meet an echelon convoy coming up from Mavinga. It was late at night/early hours of the morning some of us were sleeping (or trying to) in the back of the Ratel, suddenly there was a whole lot of shouting, a spotlight was shining, the Ratel started swerving left and right and then there was rifle fire. This woke me up better than any cold water shower, panicking I started to hunt around the darkened Ratel for my rifle, it wasn't in the rack where I left, now I was shitting myself in a contact and I had no rifle!!! I looked around the Ratel, the rest of the guys were standing on the hatches shouting and firing I asked what the hell was going on, Oosie opened my hatch and told me to get up and have a look. As I peeked out to where the spotlight was I could see an antelope!! We were chasing it and the guys were trying to shoot it, they failed miserably and it escaped into the night. The rest of the trip passed without incident thank Christ I don't think my frayed nerves could have taken any more.

During one of observation and listening post assignments, we were set out supposedly facing the direction we were expecting Fapla to approach from, however they were actually passing us on our flanks. We received a frantic all over the radio to return to the vehicles immediately (the sections had deployed on

foot with the vehicles pulled into a laager) so we had to run for our lives back to the vehicles, jump in and we were off through the bush, driving over trees, through bushes as fast as we could. There was frantic calls over the radio that we were about to be encircled!! we made it with only minutes to spare. We later found it was elements of 21 and 25 Bgd's attempt to launch an attack on 32 Bn and Bcoy.

4 SAI and its Oliphant tanks had now joined the SA forces in Angola. B coy 61 Mech were dealt into 32 Bn under



Kmdt Hartslief. On the 9th Nov 4 SAI and the rest of 61 were to attack 16 Bde. We (32 BN & B Coy 61) were to attack 59 Bde. This was to be 4 SAI's first action of Modular and the first time SA tanks had taken on enemy tanks since WWII. 4 SAI picked up a few casualties during the attack, when we arrived at 59's position we found it deserted, they had withdrawn during the night.

11th Nov 4 SAI and 61 Mech attacked 16 Bde again, we (32 BN & B Coy 61) were flanking cover to prevent Fapla launching a counter-attack around their flank during this operation

16th/17th Nov saw us engage elements of 21 Bde & 25 Bde SW of the bridge across the Chambinga river. We had to move through some pretty thick bush and the going was pretty slow. We were deployed on the right flank as cover (BCoy 61 Mech) for the main attack of 4SAI and the tanks. As it turned out we made contact with some Fapla units, and had some close calls with some mortar rounds. I don't remember a lot of this particular battle, I do remember walking among the Fapla positions after they had fled picking up discarded equipment, jackets, water bottles, boots, hats etc. Years later we had a visit from some 'affirmative shoppers' who took my 'balsak' which had most of my army gear in it.

This turned out to BCoy 61 Mech's last attack; we



had been involved in every action since early Sept. Up until now every other Coy had a rest period at some stage, except us and as a result this earned us a rest. During the next few days we set up OP's and listening posts to keep an eye on Fapla and warn of any sudden or threatening manoeuvres around our other units. Soon we began heading south to Mavinga.

One of the biggest problems for us troops was boredom. Only a few guys brought books along so these were read 2 or 3 times by everybody, there were only a couple of decks of cards around which were jealously guarded and after a few weeks of heavy use they had fallen apart. Draughts and chess with super C's soon became boring. It was only natural that sooner or later some of the guys would get up to mischief. Fire extinguishers became a source of amusement for 23C for a few days until the gas charge ran out. What we would do was take the plastic tub from the intravenous tube from the medic kit and slide it over the gas valve on the fire extinguisher inside the Ratel. The free end was put in your mouth while the valve is depressed, the gas is then sucked in the effect was quite euphoric, it caused a sort of black and grey chess board effect in front of your eyes (as if you've closed your eyes and squeezing them with your fingers) and you lost all coordination and sort of rendered you catatonic. We would have competitions, we would sit in the Ratel doorway and suck on the gas, when we got to the point of being catatonic we would jump out and see how far we could run. The record was about 5 meters!! before collapsing in a giggling heap, motor function completely gone. Thank God we never had a fire to deal with our extinguisher would have been useless

Personal hygiene was also a problem with water being in such short supply baths/showers were very rare. Clothes washing was not an option so our browns were black to the point where we could scrap the accumulated muck off with a knife. Our skin was pretty much the same, instead of a suntanned brown we were a dirty black/brown. Again the dirt could be scrapped off with a knife and we stank to high heaven. One of the guys in our section was quite a heavy sweater and he really stank, his feet sweated so much his boots were covered in white salt crystals, it got so bad inside the Ratel that we actually kicked him out of the Ratel and made him sit on top while we drove through the bush.

Eventually when we pulled into one laager we made plans to have some sort of a wash. We dug a shallow rectangular hole in the dirt next to the Ratel and lined it with a bivvy. Each troop donated 2lt of their water rations and poured it into the 'bath' we then wrote our name on a piece of paper, put it in a container and it was drawn out, that was the order you would bath. The first guy got clean water to bath in, with each guy the water got dirtier to the point where it was hardly worthwhile climbing into the bath. Occasionally we'd pull into a laager near old Fapla or Unita positions, I took this opportunity to go foraging for whatever I could find. Sometimes I would find discarded rations, ammunition, magazines or items of clothing. This was usually discouraged, on one occasion a troop found an unexploded rifle grenade or RPG round which subsequently went off while he was handling it severely injuring him, I can't remember if he died or not.

In one of our laagers one night we had a couple of visitors, a couple of Fapla deserters gave themselves up. We were called to guard them while Unita were informed and sent someone to fetch them. They didn't speak any English or Afrikaans and none of us spoke Portuguese or any of the native languages. These guys were barely more than children, 15 years old, they looked terrified and probably weren't sure what was going to happen to them. They were eventually handed over to Unita I don't know what happened to them after that.

When we arrived back at Mavinga the 'rowers' or replacements were there to meet us to take over the Ratels, at least the drivers and gunners were, over the next few days they would get the Ratels ready to carry on the operations against Fapla. I can only imagine what they must have thought when they saw us lot climbing out the vehicles, rough, unwashed, filthy stinking, unshaven ('armpits with eyeballs' was one term I heard to describe us). The looks on their faces were a mixture of awe, shock surprise and fear. One of the parting comments I heard as we left them 'julle gaan kak daar bo' didn't fill them with much confidence. We climbed on board the 'flossie' crammed in like sardines, kit and bodies everywhere, nobody wanted to be left behind, we left Mavinga at 03h00 on 1st Dec. We flew into Rundu from there we were loaded into Kwêvoëls and taken back across the border to a transit camp just inside Angola.

In this camp we were told to hand in all our old cloth-

ing, sleeping bag, webbing, boots etc (we kept our rifles) we were issued with nice clean, fresh clothes and for the first time in months we were able to shower with soap and shampoo. It took quite a few showers with lots of scrubbing over several days before we looked clean. During our time there we were given intelligence debriefing and examined by psychiatrists 'koptiffies'. We were herded into a room as a section and asked a series of questions to which we gave some half arsed answers, told the doctor this was a waste of time and left the room a few minutes thereafter. The first couple of days beers were freely available a lot of the guys were getting absolutely legless and out of control after which the beers were rationed. After what we'd been through there was a lot of pent up aggression anger, fear etc, most of the guys were just blowing off steam, only natural. While we were there our replacements arrived, we made a point one night after a few too many beers of finding our opposite numbers and telling them the most awful stories we could think of. If they were apprehensive about going up to the front before, by the time we had finished they were absolutely dreading it.

After 5 days in the transit camp we headed back to Omutiya to hand in our rifles and pack up the rest of our kit. From there we headed to Tsumeb for our uitklaar/medal parade before heading to Grootfontein, where we spent the night, the next morning we flew to Waterkloof where our loved ones and TV crews were waiting to meet us. After climbing off the Samil with my kit it took me a few minutes to locate my parents, I watched them from a short distance away as they tried to find me in the crowd. Even



although they stared straight at me a few times they failed to recognize me, it was only after I walked up and spoke to them did they realize who I was.

This is my story.
L/Cpl J McCrum



This Quarters Winning Recipes



By

**Gregory
De Ricquebourg**

Greg's Famous Lamb Curry – Deluxe

Ingredients:

2 x Kg Lamb Knuckle cut into bite size pieces

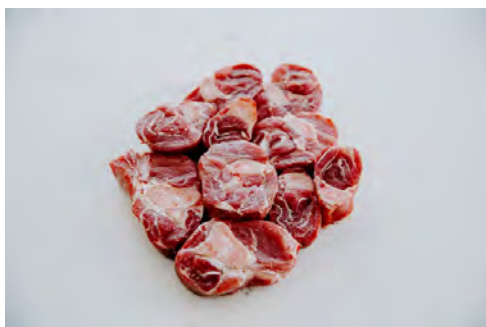
Spices:

One dessert spoon of the following:

Coriander seed
Jeera (Cumin)
Soomph (Fennel)
Poppy seeds
Whole black Pepper corns
Whole Cloves
Mustard seed
Methi (Fenugreek)
Curry Powder of choice

Two dessert spoon of the following:

Turmeric
Coarse Salt
Grated Green Ginger root
Crushed Garlic
6 x pods Elachi
2 x whole star Anise



The 61 Mech Veterans work hard. But they also make time for social occasions with their fellow 61 MVA colleagues. This column is dedicated to the proven recipes prepared at such social gatherings.

It is about braai, potjie, biltong and the rest. To have your recipe published in this space, kindly submit it in Word or similar with Jpeg photos attached to

lotterdh@gmail.com

Fresh Produce:

4 x Onions (chopped)
1 x bunch Curry Leaves
3 x big ripe Tomatoes (chopped)
1 x bunch Curry Leaves
1 x bunch fresh Coriander / Dhanian
1 x bunch fresh Dhanian
2 x stems fresh Curry leaves
4 x big potatoes cut into quarters
(place in a bowl of water prior to cooking to prevent them turning brown).

Other

1 x small tin Tomato paste
1 x cup cooking Oil
2 x dry chillies or fresh (cut in half)
1 x teaspoon of crushed dried chillies (optional).
4 x BIG pieces of cinnamon bark
4 x chicken stock (concentrated liquid sachets)

Method:

Step 1.

Place all the SPICES (except the turmeric and curry powder) in a dry frying pan and heat until the seeds start to pop – 6-8 minutes (shake the pan frequently to prevent burning).

Allow to cool.

Blend in a spice blender (preferred) or Crush in a pestle and mortar.

Place in a container together with all the other spices including salt, turmeric, curry powder.

Step 2.

Heat the oil in a big saucepan and add the onions, chillies, one stem fresh curry leave (removed from the stem).

Cook till the onions are soft.

Add the garlic and ginger – cook about 30 seconds.

Add all the mixed spices – cook about one minute stirring frequently (add a little water to prevent sticking if needed).

Add the tomatoes, tomato paste and reduce the mixture stirring frequently.

Add the chicken stock – cook on a gentle heat until the tomatoes are reduced.

Step 3.

Two options:

Option 1

Add the curry leaves, and the meat and mix in with the sauce – place in the fridge and allow to marinate over night before cooking and then proceed to step 2.

OR

Option 2

Add the curry leaves and the meat, cook on low heat (gentle simmer) for about an hour checking frequently until you have liquid simmering on the top.

-

Add the potatoes, mix thoroughly with the meat and continue to simmer until the meat and the potatoes are soft.

Never rush the cooking.

About five minutes before serving – add the fresh coriander leaves / Dhania.

Note: The trick is to try and generate the liquid from the ingredients. However the ingredients need to be covered with liquid for the final cooking stage. This is not a cook and forget process – keep checking and if there is not enough liquid being generated add boiling water (so as not to slow down the cooking process) in small quantities to finally get the ingredients covered.

Step 4

Serve with Rice and or Roti.

Tip: Add a pinch of saffron to a cup of hot water. Add this to the rice water and cook the rice in it.

Don't overdo the saffron – it can leave a medicinal taste.

Aaaaaaaggh !!too much of Dash Peru! (my kids can explain this).



Potjiekos Wenke

Potjiekos word tradisioneel in 'n driebeen gietysterpot voorberei.

Potjiekos word gemaak deur vleis stadig te kook in 'n sous en wyn, en dan groente en speserye by te voeg.

Die verskillende bestandele word in lae bo op die vleis gepak.

Die groot verskil tussen potjiekos en bredies is dat potjiekos nie geroer word tydens die gaarmaak proses nie. Dit het 'n geurvolle maal tot gevolg waar geure meng maar die verskillende bestandele hulle eie unieke geur behou.

Die potjie moet liggies prut. Die sleutel tot heerlike potjiekos is om dit stadig te laat kook..

Potjiekos word tradisioneel bedien met gestoomde rys of mieliepap.



Deur

*Anton
Muller*

Anton se Brisket oor die Kole (Vir 10 persone)

VLEIS:

Kies A graad brisket by jou slaghuis.

Nie te veel vet nie.

Slagter moet meer rib as brisket aansny.

Saag haaks uit - oor vier ribbes in die lengte.

Snit moet die dimensies van jou toeklaprooster hê, 300x400 maks.

Sal so 2,5 tot 3,9 kilos weeg.

Koop groot - daar bly NOOIT iets oor nie!

Vleis kan tot n week in jou yskas le en verouder.

GEURMIDDELS:

Net growwe sout en swart peper - of Freddy

Hirsch Hunters Biltong spice.

Opsioneel 2 tot 4 knoffelhuissies heel gekneus.

Dis al.

VOORBEREIDING:

Kry jou grootste reghoekige staal oondbak wat die

hele snit sal akkommodeer en onder in jou oond pas.

Sit droee snit op swaar diens foelie en vryf sout goed in ... aan beide kante.

Sny in (score) die taai velletjie of vet buite aan die rib - repe of blokkies - en vryf sout daarin.

Frommel ekstra stukke foelie op en bedek skerp punte waar die ribbes gesaag is.

Draai nou die hele snit baie versigtig toe.

Maak seker die foelie is lugdig verseel.

Draai die snit 'n tweede keer toe om seker te maak die sous bly binne.

Plaas in oondbak met vet kant bo, bene onder.

OOND BAK:

Bak snit binne in foelie teen 160C tot 180C.

Baktyd 2,5 tot 3,5 ure ...

Ou gasoonde vat dalk langer.

Hoe swaarder hoe langer.

Hoe meer vet hoe langer.

Bak liewer te lank as te kort.

Vleis moet pap wees ... nie meer ferm nie.

Laat effe afkoel tot hanteerbaar.

Skeur n klein gaatjie in een hoek van die foelie.

Gooi al die vloeistof uit in 'n melk beker Oug).

Vloeistof kan tot 1,5 liter wees.

Die helfte is olie - die res is stock.

Gooi die olie af en hou die stock vir die vuur



en opskeptafel.

OPDIS:

Haal die foelie versigtig af - dis effe morsig so werk op ou koerant.

Die 4 ribbebene moet los en maklik uittrek - gooi hulle maar vir die honde.

As die snit baie DIK is kan jy horn soos 'n boek deur die MIDDEL kloof daar waar die binnevet geleë was tussen die binneste en die buitenste lae vleis.

Plaas die pap gebakte snit binne in jou grootste toeklaprooster.

Bedek met koerant (anders steel mens en dier die hele lot voor jy naby die vuur kom).

oor die kole:

Maak 'n groot vuur met goeie harde hout.

Jy soek medium warm kole.

Jou snit binne die toeklaprooster is heel hanteerbaar.

Dis nie nodig om die rooster toe te klamp nie - hou net altyd die handvatsels bo as jy dit omdraai of aandra.

Bak jou vleis hoog genoeg sodat vlamme van die laaste vet nie die snit kan brand nie.

Jy kan bietjie van die stock oorsprinkel om die snit se voginhoud te handhaaf maar moenie dit . . versulple.

Die idee is om die laaste vet en die buitenste lae BROS te bak tot donkerbruin.

Toets vir sout - sprinkel nog oor totdat dit lekker deurkom.

Die houtvuur gee ekstra smaak aan die snit.
30 tot 40 minute oor die kale is genoeg om almal by jou paartie mal te maak.

Direk van die kale af in 'n reuse opdisbord (voorverhit).

So nie n groot houtbak werk ook vir 'n rustic setting.

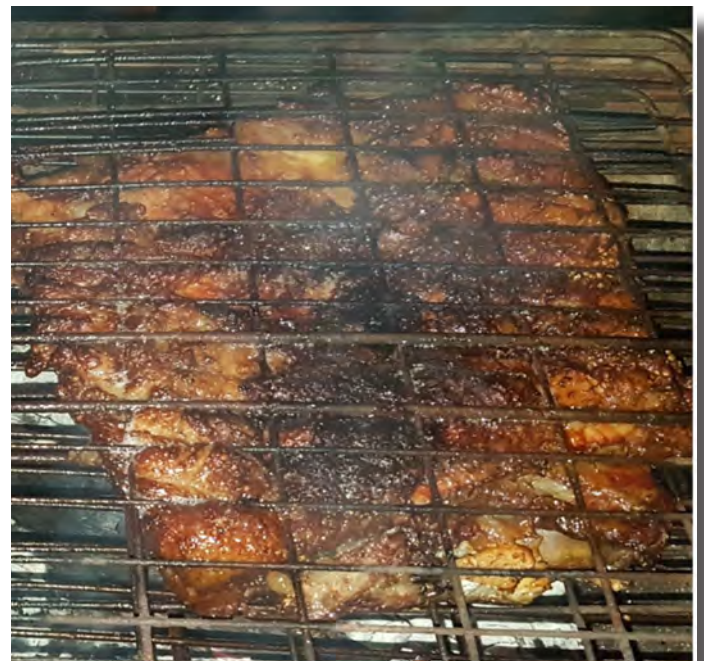
Sny die pap vleis dwars oor die grein as jy wil sny ... so nie trek met twee vurke uit mekaar.

Giet die oorblywende stock warm oor.

Die vleis is BAIE RYK maar super sag en geurig. Bedien dus met neutrale disse soos oondgebakte groentes en;

KOESKOES of
BASMATI RYS of
KAPOKAARTAPPEL of
POTBROOD.

Ns: Oefen 'n paar gevleuelde woorde - 'n antwoord as almal jou toesak vir nog ...
of
begin chant "hero ... hero ... hero!"



Herinneringe

Ek onthou ons eerste patrolie tydelike basis, die ongelooflike sonsondergange in Ovambo-land, soos wat jy nerens anders sal kry nie. Sowat van kleure terwyl die tarentale in die bome met mekaar baklei oor 'n slaapplekkie vir die nag tesame met die ander veldgeluide.

2Lt Gert Minnaar, Peleton 1, Bravo kompanie, 1981



Deur

*Sarel
Coetzee*

Sarel se Tenker Ontbyt

Bestanddele:

- 3 Groot Uie
- Gemengde groenkruie (na smaak)
- 2 teelepels matige kerriepoeier
- 2 teelepels knoffel
- 2 blikke bully beef/spek en kaas worsies
- 1 blikkie boerie tamatie smoor
- 2 blikkies baked beans
- 2 blikkies room mielies
- 2 eiers per persoon



Braai 3 groot uie tot bruin in olie.

Braai nou gemengde groenkruie, 2 teelepels matige kerriepoeier en 2 teelepels knoffel saam met die uie en skep uit.

Voeg nog olie by en braai 2 blikke Bully Beef wat in blokkies gekerf is tot bruin. Jy kan spek en kaasworsies ook gebruik dan is dit 'n moffie ontbyt.

Gooi nou die uie terug en gooi 'n blikkie boerie tamatie smoor by.

Gooi nou twee blikkies baked beans en twee blikkies roommielies in.

Breek nou 2 eiers per persoon bo op die maal. Sit die deksel op die pot en pak kole op die deksel om die eiers gaar te kry.

Krap ook meeste van die kole onder die pot uit, anders brand hy.

As die eiers hard is, kyk op en dank die Vader vir die maaltyd en die feit dat jy baie het om oor dankbaar te wees.

Die maaltyd is op sy lekkerste as jy dit met ghries hande wat na diesel ruik eet.



Muse

** A Muse is the source of artistic inspiration. "*

PRO PATRIA

You stood against insanity while men fell at my feet,
Embracing your own vanity with gold strewn on your street
You prophesied futility at a war you saw forlorn,
We amplified hostilities...our minds were wrecked and worn
The truth is always silent, each carry their own cross
Like you we were not violent, though silent at our loss
Our gain, at least, to face the Beast with mind renewed return,
But you my friend, are like the yeast, and Sadducees will burn

I've sacrificed my conscience in a land I knew not well
And crucified my innocence in the raging fires of hell
Don't speak to me, you Pharisee, of a life that seems unfair
When we did those things in the courts of kings
That a jester would not dare
While you stressed about those sleepless nights
Or the clothes you could not wear,
We'd had our fill of firefights and a land that would not care

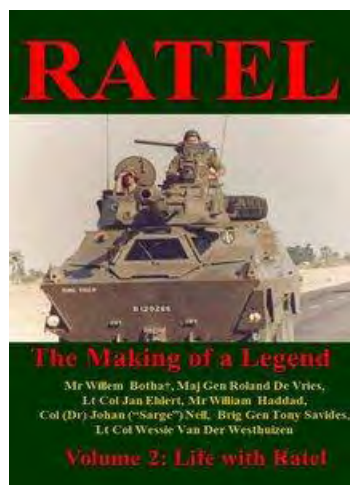
When you speak to me of misery, reflect upon my tale,
And the darkness that embitters you, appears at once so pale
You protested violence, and detest in me my call,
While I contested silence...for those who fell and fall
I too fantasise that love and hope once more shall reign,
But don't deny myself red wine in fear of crimson stains
I've carried darker stains and groped, but damned to do again
From twine I've made a metal rope to put a bar to shame

In altitude and aptitude I've reached some dizzy heights
The Beast respects my attitude, when visiting at nights
My death, despair and solitude he once held in firm grasp,
But new breath, care and attitude released me from his clasp
My fortress now established in the seed the Bible sows
My headdress has been banished, and the need no longer flows
To wage a war of any kind not borne of a healthy heart,
But gauge in awe the content mind, not torn or ripped apart

My friends lie silent on that hill, their blood sipped by the sand
Their ends met by the cheapest thrill, ordained by leaders of this land,
But don't deny them favour for the deeds you may despise,
For their hearts were a different flavour and your ears heard many lies
They were men against not many; they were selfless for their time,
And when looking for a penny, would give more than just a dime
Your thoughts are good in theory, but in practise come to naught,
For expressions made with fiery mouths are useless when not fought

Corporal Hugh Termorshuizen 1989

A REVIEW ON RATEL – THE MAKING OF A LEGEND



In Two Volumes Vol ISBN978-0-620-83634-0 and 978-0-620-83636-4.

Irrespective of where readers might open the volumes, they will immediately get the feeling of having a great publication at hand.

In 2009 the team of seven people, whose lives had been linked to Ratel and to mechanised infantry over decades, commenced in-depth research in all earnest and, after almost

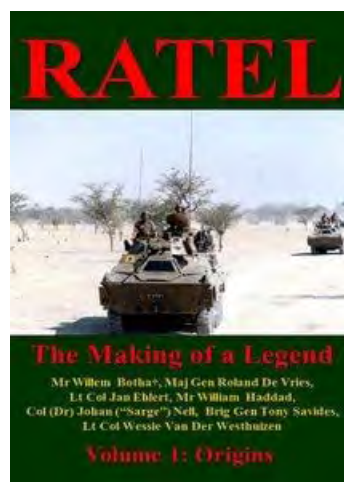
eleven years, the book was published in 2020.

Researchers and other readers interested in technical specifications will find these and much more detail that has never been published before. The same applies for those interested in the tactical and operational history of Ratel. The story of “Ratel” captivates the reader from its development, production and deployment and most importantly, through to its major feats in battle.

The two volumes are best summarised by Genl. Constant Viljoen:” To a great degree Ratel epitomises more than just its role as an ICV, it also epitomises the South African can-do attitude and willingness to face up to and beat challenges.”

The first thing that draws the attention is the title of this two-volume work, which does not describe the Ratel as a subject, but just “Ratel”, as if the vehicle is a living being. The entire work gives the impression that it is Ratel writing its own autobiography,

This monumental work is a perfect tribute to the soldiers who saw combat in Ratel, a sentiment reinforced by the fact that the authors do not gain financially from this publication, with any profit from sales intended to assist South African war veterans. The history of Ratel started during the late 1960s when the requirement for an ICV for the SA Army first surfaced. Although the two volumes can be read as separate entities, the reader will find more value by cross-referencing between both volumes, since the work, specifically in Volume II, does not always follow a rigid timeline. “In essence, Volume 1 is the heart of the Ratel Story while Volume 2 reflects its soul in the evolution of Ratel through the eyes of Ratel users. The volumes are not a single narrative, but the authors succeed in the 44 chapters in weaving an interesting and captivating mesh, which facilitates a detailed understanding of the overall narrative. The bonding between the facts, reminiscences, tales, sketches, discussions and opinions



facilitates both research and academic reference as well as providing an entertaining reading experience.

Volume 1 is the analysis and tracking of the genealogy of this warrior called Ratel. The authors provide a captivating reader experience by establishing a coherent environment in the development of Ratel and its variants, the operational and support environment, through

to the most important component of the total system, the human component – soldiers of various positions, ranks, corps. This theme is maintained and supported throughout both volumes.

In comparison to the more technical nature of Volume I, the narrative style of Volume II makes for more relaxed reading. The author makes liberal use of authoritative literature from well-received books from the Border War which lends credibility to the narrative’s skilfully embroidered reminiscences of various users of Ratel.

Volume II follows two golden threads. Firstly the comparison between Ratel and its namesake in the animal world:” Ratel” - the Honey Badger, Secondly the author highlights eight watershed events on the pathway of Ratel and the significance of each of these on its development and application. Describing Ratel in these events rather than in individual battles provides the reader with an incremental frame of reference. The author did an excellent job on describing the shaping of the soul of Ratel from the initial development of the battle handling doctrine to its continuous evolution as the war escalated. The volume is rich in anecdotes on feats and contributions of commanders, junior leaders and rank and file soldiers.

The authors succeed in writing a monumental piece of history concerning Ratel, its users and its employment. Although some photos are low-resolution, this book was clearly never intended as a photo history.

The reviewer compared the volumes with similar works since World War I and could find no work in such minute detail as the Ratel Book. It is recommended for the future, though, that the authors compile a single page diagram of a timeline of some sort to make the story even more clear.

The reviewer highly recommends this work, which will fit equally well on the bookshelf of a researcher and of the enthusiastic military reader.

A Final Note: Reading RATEL – THE MAKING OF A LEGEND is an immense experience where one gets the feeling that Ratel is sentient. Ratel is able to perceive and feel things!!



*Original Photo: Mark Farrel - A Coy -
Ops Askari 1984*

Met Leisels soos 'n Perd.

Om Kompaniebevelvoerder te wees – Wat 'n Voorreg!

SA Leërdamesverenigings Ratelrit 1981.

Captain Payne and Rough Hands.

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Rubriek

Stemme uit 'n Bos

*Anekdoties en Vertellings,
Relevante Humor, Persoon-
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Column

Voices from a Bush

*Anecdotes and Narratives,
Relevant Humor, Personal
Experiences and Stories.*

Dien asseblief jou bydrae in vir die volgende 61 MVA Kwartaal Joernaal Maart 2023.

Kindly submit your contribution for the next 61 MVA Quarterly Journal March 2023.

Stemme uit 'n Bos / Voices from a Bush

Met Leisels soos 'n Perd.

Dawid Lotter

Die drywer van 'n voertuig, spesifiek 'n gevegs-voertuig soos 'n Ratel of Buffel ens ...het 'n minder aangename taak gehad in die Bosoerlog. In die geval van die Ratel luister hy deur sy kopstuk en voer bevele uit – LINKS -NEE!!!! Nog Links. !!! Want hy sit te laag in die Ratel om die konteks te begryp. En sodra die toring Bevelvoerder en die Gunner bedrywig raak met die skietery en beheer, dan sit daardie drywer in sy hokkie vasgevang. En nou loop daar skielik iets skeef met die kopstuk / borsharnas - kommunikasie. Die drywer volg vorige instruksies, die gunner soek teikens in 'n ander rigting en die toring Bevelvoerder is op die hoër, of laer seinnet besig. En dan raak dinge letterlik Drie-of-Vier-dimensioneel.

Jy los die gunner op sy eie om “te vind en te vernietig”. Maar die drywer is die sleutel tot die rigting van vuur, en hy sien mos nie wat aangaan nie. So hy draai regs in plaas van links. Ens. Dan was dit dat die Toringbevelvoerder van die drywer 'n perd gemaak het. 'n Toutjie aan sy linker tanksuit lapel en een aan die regter lapel. En nou word die drywer gelei deur plukke aan sy skouers. Ten minste het hy nou rigting – Maar hoeveel regs of hoeveel links, dit sê die leisels mos nie. En as die arme man dan nou die pluk van die leisels se grade verkeerd interpreteer, dan help die toring bevelvoerder se Army Boot hom van bo af reg.

Nie lekker om n drywer te gewees het nie.



Om Kompaniebevelvoerder te wees - Wat n Voorreg!

Dawid Lotter

Ek was so gelukkig om in my kort loopbaan vyf kompanies te kon gehad het. Met jou eerste kompanie is jy 'n sippier. “Rules are rules and rules must be obeyed.”. Dan sluit jy die sel vir die aand. So kom jy later agter dat 'n tronk net effektief kan wees, as die gevangenis gelukkig is.

Volgende keer raak jy 'n onderwyser. Jy leer hulle wat hulle moet doen, en die voordele daarvan. Maar jy dink nie dat dit wat jy wil hê hulle moet doen ter wille van hulself, is anders oor hoe hulle dit sien nie. Jy leer uit jou ondervinding en daarna raak jy dan meer



'n ouboet - toeganklik en begryplik. Jy vertel nie meer vir pa alles van kleinboet se sondes nie. Op 'n ouboet manier karnuffel jy hom soos wat 'n goedge Great Dane met 'n spelerige lastige foxterrier maak. Jy sit net die voet van gesag so liggies op sy rug neer. Hy glo dit is erg, maar jy weet jy gaan hom nie seermaak nie.

Soos jou wysheid groei ontwikkel jy die vaderlike gevoel teenoor hulle. Jy bou meer as wat jy afbreek - jy gesels meer en berispe minder - jy verstaan meer en oordeel minder - jy ignoreer die label en waardeer die inhoud.

As jy dan die punt bereik om soos 'n oupa teenoor hulle te voel, dan is jou tyd as kompanie bevelvoerder verby. Want dan wil jy hulle beskerm teen alles – teen jou beterwete. En dan bevorder die Army jou tot Kmdt om jou van jouself te red.

SA Leërdamesverenigings Ratelrit 1981



Die besoekersgroep pas vóór hul vertrek na nog 'n basis.

Voorsitsters van SA Leërdamesverenigings se oriënteringsbesoek aan die Operasionele Gebied.

***Paratus Februarie 1981 -
Mev Sophie Muller***

'n Ruk later sit ek saam met agt ander vrouens in 'n Ratel - nie die soort wat langs die rivier geboer het nie, maar 'n lang bruine wat van slaal gemaak is. Ons staan dapper regop met ons koppe in die wind. Maar toe raak die seuntjie (hy is maar net 'n seuntjie met kakieklere aan en net so groot soos my eie dierbare kind by die huis) heeltemal besete en draai die Ratel se neus van die pad af. Ek ruk my kop terug deur die gat en gaan sit op die sitplek. Nou is daar seker moeilikheid !

Ek loer vorentoe. maar die kind in die voorste kajuit

het 'n skalkse glimlag op sy gesig. Nou kyk, as hy nie hang is nie, sal ek ook my kant bring. Ek sit kalm terug. gereed vir die ergste. Ons peil reg op 'n doringboom af en loop bo-oor hom. Toe wip ons oor 'n sloot en die bruin Ratel vreet ook die volgende boom. Die mannetjie in die stuurkajuit lag vrolik. Toe weet ek: Die klein snuiter is besig om die tannies reg te sien - nie die terries nie!

En net daar verloor ek al my onbeskryflike deernis wat ek vir die "seuntjies" gehad het!

Die deernis keer eers weer terug toe ek later by die kamp kyk hoe die son in 'n donkerrooi bal agter die wit doringbosse wegraak. Die aandsinjaal klink anders as ooit tevore in my lewe en ek staan met die klompie seuns kersregop toe die vlag stadig in die warm skemerlig sak.

Herinneringe

Ek onthou ons eerste aankoms op Grootfontein. Uitgereik met skerp ammunisie, gou by die SAWI winkel ingehardloop vir sigarette en sommer 'n Border Warder T hemp ook en van daar agter op Samils na Omuthiya. Dit was moer warm en ons was almal skytbang want agter elke klip sit daar mos 'n terr.

Sktr C M van der Bijl, Alfa kompanie, Kanonier 1980

Captain Payne and the “Rough Hands”

*Cometh the Moment Cometh the man....
Roland de Vries*

I learned my fair portion of life's lessons from the plight of 'Captain Payne' and the 'Rough Hands' with 61 Mech at Omuthiya and in southern Angola. The 'Rough Hands' were to be deployed with 61 Mech in the field during an eventful August 1981 in Angola, 17km east of Cahama. The mentioned lessons taught me something about destiny and providence.

They assuredly taught me lessons in humility, humanity and about other forms of dignity and how to be thankful for small mercies and little things in life. Furthermore, they taught me about simple leadership traits and what loyalty truly meant when experiencing dire straits and life to the full. After I had had the privilege of meeting Captain Payne and the Rough Hands I valued my own children and my young troops at 61 Mech more. Rough Hands literally referred to the people we had in uniform in the erstwhile defence force who worked extremely hard with their bare hands. In Afrikaans, they were referred to as the 'Skurwe Hande'. They literally provided a major portion of manual labour to the defence force.

They were people who did compulsory national service and came from questionable walks of life. Most of them were trouble and had a history of drug addiction while some were outright criminals with dossiers as long as my arm. They were not in the force to bear arms or to render operational service – this in fact was totally forbidden for obvious reasons. Not being entrusted to bear arms they were food for manual labour only.

Their home was the Engineer Corps in Kroonstad where they were schooled in the tricks of manual trade. As a rule of thumb they could cause disciplinary nightmares in a jiffy, but amongst them I have found some crown jewels. It was late July 1981 at Omuthiya, and I had just received my warning order for 61 Mech that Operation Protea, which was scheduled for August, was going to happen.

All preparations and planning for the operation unfolded in utmost secrecy and our planning maps were marked with code words and nicknames. One of the military targets given to 61 Mech by the military planners in Windhoek was 'Apple Pie', a small town called Humbe situated approximately 8km west



of Xangongo and the Cunene River. About 45 km further to the north-west lay the town of Cahama which was home to a mechanised mobile reserve of FAPLA. I knew that if the bulk of 61 Mech left Omuthiya for Operation Protea I would need extra hands to look after and maintain our base. Such work entailed kitchen and messing fatigues, ablutions cleaning, maintenance of the evaporation dams of our sewage system and daily refuse removal trips with our trusted captured Russian Gaz truck. It was important work that had to be done, even if it was not very pleasant and becoming to professional soldiers. I therefore sent a telex message to Army HQ in Pretoria to request additional hands at Omuthiya for base maintenance – I did not reckon on the Skurwe Hande or on the influence they were going to exert on my life and that of a few other people at 61 Mech.

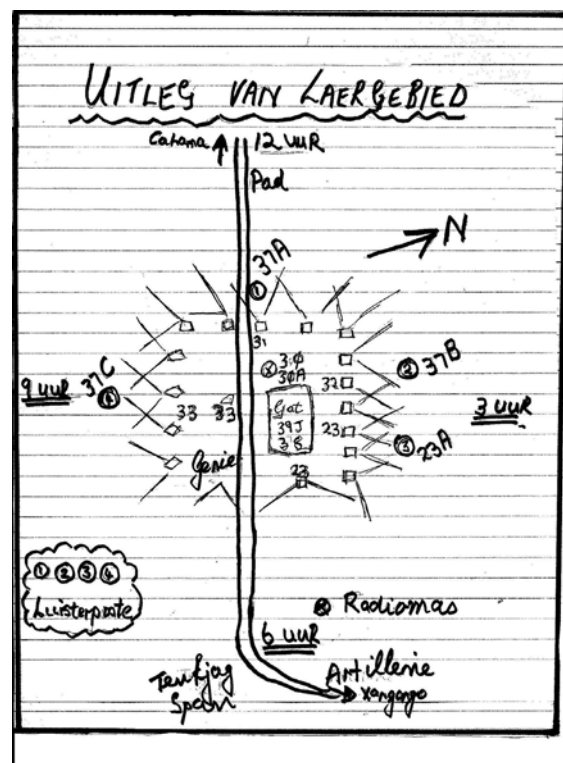
The Skurwe Hande subsequently arrived at Grootfontein in a luxurious C-130 Hercules transport aircraft – a first for them. With them was Captain Payne their undisputed informal leader – no questions asked or margins set. He was sitting, as I learned later from him, calmly relaxing in the red jump seat of the C-130, completely confident in his own personal strength, ability and authority. They did not know a hell where they were going or what they were letting themselves in for... Sergeant Major 'Valie' went to receive them (and a big surprise) at Grootfontein Airfield. Their 16 x 32 Khaki-coloured tent was pitched to the east of the base, somewhat removed from the operational sub-units who were obviously, as well-trained operational hands, a cut above the rest.

The scene was set and something unforgettable was going to happen in the lives of twelve unsuspecting Skurwe Hande and an equally unsuspecting 61 Mech. Meeting with surprises was the spice of life at 61 Mech. The Skurwe Hande became a regular sight at Omuthiya and we got used to them – they were in a new comfort zone. In their sweaty, dirty nutria overalls they were cleaning the base, driving the Russian Gaz truck, removing the rubbish, wandering down to maintain the evaporation dam with brooms, spades and rakes – as per strictly laid down base routine and maintenance instructions.

Their tent was regularly inspected by the staunch RSM M.C. Barnard and amicable Warrant Officer Class 1 Valie. Valie was the Base Maintenance Manager. While the Skurwe Hande were slogging away, we were busy with the more serious real stuff of pro-

fessional soldiering – driving north out of Omuthiya with our Ratels and exercising repeatedly on the training range with live ammunition for the oncoming operation – and coming back exhausted in the evenings, but totally content with ourselves and extremely satisfied with our progress. Contentment was shared having a cold beer at our canteen at Omuthiya as the sun was setting. Some nights we were out in the field, exercising our night manoeuvres and navigation and movement skills. Meanwhile the Skurwe Hande was left in peace to do things Skurwe Hande do.

One day however a subtle change occurred: My sub-unit commanders informed me that we had serious trouble. This was not long after Payne and his team of eleven base labourers, with extremely rough hands, had arrived on the scene. Some of our troops were lying in our sickbay. They had sustained serious wounds encountered during the darkness of the previous night. It happened again the next night. Nobody, but nobody was talking or shedding light on the cause – but we could clearly see the effect – blood spoiled bandages and wounding it were. Not even the victims were uttering sounds of enlightenment. They had been hit with iron bars acquired, liberated in fact, from the tent store of the base Quarter Master. No near real-time intelligence was forthcoming. I then deployed Chaplain Koos Rossouw and RSM M.C. Barnard to find out what the hell was going on – but still nothing came forth. My sub-unit commanders were astounded. The strong informal internal intelligence system of 61 Mech was suddenly quiet; it



yielded no valuable information.

I promptly sat down with my command team and deeply assessed the troubling situation. I was fast running out of serviceable troops for Operation Protea; this was still being kept a big secret up to then, by the way. It was time to get to the bottom of things. We realised that this had changed dramatically after Captain Payne and his merry men had arrived. So, I asked: Who is this Captain Payne? I want to see him in my white prefab not-often-used office at Omuthiya the next day at 10h30 – or words to that effect. I was at last going to meet this notorious man, apparently gifted with a ‘sixth sense’ and a commanding presence of note. I wanted to see him alone on orders without my adjutant or RSM being present - a serious one-on-one. So, the next day in my office I met with Captain Payne and politely asked him to sit down on a camp chair facing me and started by inquiring why they called him Captain Payne. He coolly pulled down the shoulders of his dirty, sweaty, odour-filled nutria overall. I could see the blue ink spots on his hands, indicating that he was a regular user of some devious and harmful substances. Tattooed on each shoulder were the three stars of a captain. I said:

Thank you, Captain, now I understand. The battle lines were now clearly drawn for our next bout of argument. So, I said again, clearly in control of the proceedings, why are you knocking the shit out of my troops, which he coolly answered with “Nobody respects us here. I know you are preparing to go to Angola. We want to go with. If you don’t take us with, I will destroy your base when you are gone.” This was one helluve powerful argument, and I thought deeply about his demand. Ah, hell, I thought, in for a penny, in for a pound. This could become an interesting experiment and a morale booster to 61 Mech to boot. So, I made one of the more stupid decisions of my career and said, “OK, here are my conditions...” My conditions with Payne were that the tent of the Skurwe Hande would be pitched close to my living quarters at Omuthiya – within spitting distance, to be more exact. When I did my daily inspections of the base, Payne would accompany me and my RSM. No more knocking the shit out of my troops.

The Skurwe Hande would also be issued with brand-new R-4 Rifles – they were now armed to the teeth and dangerous. In addition, they would come under command of Lieutenant Marche Mucho; be issued with a Buffel mine-protected vehicle; undergo stren-

uous combat training; protect the artillery battery of Captains Bernie Pols and Francois Van Eeden and be with the artillery as Ruth was with Naomi. Payne was not to tell any single soul that we were going into Angola. That revelation was my privilege to share with 61 Mech later. (Incidentally, the troops were only told the day before we crossed into Angola close to Ruacana and they responded with a spontaneous cheer.) I thoroughly briefed Marche Mucho and insisted that no harm was to come to my special squad. Without any delay Marche had the tiffies of Sergeant Major Duppie du Plessis paint the words ‘Phantom’ diagonally across the side-plates of the Skurwe Hande’s mine protected Buffel. Marche Mucho was one of those exquisite national service junior leaders, tall, knowledgeable, charismatic and commanding.

The Skurwe Hande could not wish for better. The Phantom Squad was now being made battle ready to protect Sierra Battery. Later, when I informed my RSM, he was not too happy with what I had arranged with Payne and what was to come – he thought that I was somewhat whacky, understandably so. Eventually the RSM quite comfortably succumbed to our Skurwe Hande ordeal. That a hair razing adventure was brewing for them, we did not realise at the time. My sub-unit commanders were slightly amused about the situation. The artillery was slightly perturbed by the excess baggage acquired. Padre Koos Rossouw, my Chaplain realized he had some extra work to do. I did not have any disciplinary problems any more with some of those few typical 61 Mech troops, who regularly caused the odd problem. Unofficially Captain



Payne was now my partner in command. He would sort out the issues with my problem children at 61 Mech and they clearly knew it. Every day, I prayed a bit harder. Life returned to normal at 61 Mech, and it was business as usual at Omuthiya.

The next scene developed after Humbe was captured on D-Day. I ordered Combat Team Charlie under command of Major Joe Weyers to deploy rapidly towards the west. They were to establish a delaying position across the front of FAPLA's mobile reserve, which lay entrenched at Cahama. For this operation, a small mobile element of 44 Parachute Brigade, with renowned Colonel Jan Breytenbach in charge, was temporarily placed under operational command of 61 Mech. I had requested him to accompany Combat Team Charlie for this operational sortie to the west with his potent little combat force of heavily armoured Sabre Land Rovers.

The combat team of Johann Weyers duly deployed within 17 km striking distance from Cahama, facing FAPLA head on. The enemy was now well within the engagement range of the 140mm guns of Captain Frans van Francois. Van Eeden deployed to the rear of the fighting line. Night was approaching fast. The Phantom Squad was there as well, closely protecting the artillery. Not too far away, slightly to the east at Mucope, I was leaguering for the night with the remainder of 61 Mech. We had an unproductive day searching for enemy remnants. From our position at Mucope later that night, we would hear the crump of mortars and other more intensive fire coming from the west.

Without any of us knowing it a large FAPLA column had escaped our attack on Xangongo. They were hiding somewhere in the dense bushes somewhere north of Xangongo and slightly west of Peu-Peu, undetected by our forces. They were waiting for darkness to exfiltrate unnoticed back to the safety of Cahama. The column consisted of an assortment of Russian armoured vehicles, military trucks and BM-21 multiple rocket launcher systems in tow. When night came the enemy column started moving stealthily back to the tarred road as silently as possible and then swung towards Cahama. They travelled at low engine revolutions all neatly in a row with infrared lights applied; towards an unsuspecting Combat Team Charlie. In an amazing feat Jan Breytenbach and Combat Team Charlie of Joe Weyers destroyed the enemy column in detail on the road that night. The battle ensued half-

way between the artillery and their forward positions.

It required quickly deploying inwardly so as engage the enemy effectively. The enemy was stretched out along the perilous road in between the deployments of our force. It was a vicious fire fight and one that we could clearly hear from our position at Mucope.

I was waiting anxiously for the outcome of the battle. Miraculously, only three soldiers of 61 Mech were slightly wounded by incoming enemy mortar fire. When I debriefed Captain Payne and the Phantom Squad a few days later in the relative safety at our position at Xangongo they told me the following hair-raising story. Captain Payne had told his troops that they could relax for the evening, because they had worked hard through the day. They were lying together on the day's sun-warm road, some of them naked. R-4 rifles were neatly stacked aside, barrels crossed. Ears were to the ground. Payne suddenly heard the low drone of the enemy column approaching directly towards them on the road from the rear.

He thought logically that it had to be the Sergeant Major approaching with replenishments. Then all hell broke loose. Tracer bullets were flying overhead, amplified by the crumps of thousands of explosive rounds. His troops lay scattered on both sides of the road. He told me that there was one thing uppermost in his mind centring on his promise to me made at Omuthiya: "Regroup, get my people safely back to the artillery and protect the guns" - which they subsequently did, miraculously without anybody being harmed in the fray. This was their story; whether everything was exactly true as they explained it, I do not know although I believed them and it matched the circumstantial evidence.

The incident had a tremendous effect on their self-esteem, about which I was extremely happy. They went back to Omuthiya later, I believed, as men, their lives changed forever.

They had an amazing experience to share with others. I sometimes wonder where they are today and what happened to them. For the Skurwe Hande, that eventful starlit night in Angola was their moment. This was about ordinary people and ordinary lives and extraordinary outcomes - cometh the moment, cometh the men and Captain Payne.

Tsumeb se Bikers en die Skurwe Hande

Deur Sammajoer HG Smit, RSM (Aft)

As 61 Meg se troepe die stalparade inspeksie gewen het, het ons hulle vir die naweek na Tsumeb gevat. Dit is nou die subeenheid wat gewen het. Dan kon hulle die Saterdagoggend winkels toe gaan en die Duitse winkeltjie wat koek en lekker koffie bedien het, gaan ondersteun.

Die middag kon hulle na TCL se swembad gaan en hulle vergaap aan die jong doedies en die aand het die Regimentsfonds 'n blok sitplekke by die fliek uitgekoopt waar die troepe dan kon gaan fliek.

Die Sondagoggend kon hulle na hulle kerkgenoot se kerk toe gaan. Die middag het hulle in die menasie geëet en dan weer terug basis toe.

Ons het hulle die dood voor die oë gesweer dat daar nie baklei mag word nie. Hulle moet op die moeilikheidmakers die rug keer en terugkeer na die Tsumeb HK.

Ons MP's het baie probleme gehad met Grootfontein se manne wat altyd kom plesier soek het op Tsumeb. Dan het dit op 'n bakleiery met die siwwies uitgeloop.

Die betrokke aand het die troepe toe weer afgestap en gaan fliek. Na fliek staan en wag die motorfietsbende hulle in met 'n klomp handwapens en hulle val die troepe aan. Die troepe weet hulle mag nie baklei nie en hulle blaas die aftog na die HK.



Die storie het toe in die dorp rond gelê dat 61 Meg se troepe 'n klomp banggatte is.

Om 'n lang storie kort te maak, het die Skurwe Hande toe eenkeer die kompetisie gewen. Dit wil se die paar eshalontroepe plus die Skurwe Hande.

So klim die lot van hulle op 'n Samil 100. Ons moet eers gaan boumateriaal laai by M en Z net buite die dorp en dan kamp toe. By die kamp aangekom het ek toe eers die leviëte voorgelees. Ek se toe vir hulle dat ek die Saterdagoggend hulle sal kom inspekteer en dan kan hulle dorp toe gaan. Min wetende wat die lot in die mou voer.

Julle kon nou al seker raai wat gaan gebeur want die twee tropleiers was kaptein Pain en skutter van der Mest.

Ek het eers heelwat later uitgevind wat presies gebeur het. In plaas daarvan dat hulle koffie drink en koek eet het hulle blykbaar die hele plek gaan verken om hulle aanval op die bikers te beplan.

So het die geveg toe verloop:

1. Net voor die laaste lig het die Samil 100 uitgeboek met die vrag boumateriaal na ons onderhoudsbasis.
2. Die ander manne het gewapen met piksteeltjies in hulle broekspype gaan fliek.
3. Die manne het toe gaan fliek.
4. Hulle het voor in die fliek gesit.
5. Toe die fliek klaar was het hulle bly sit en gewag dat almal eers uit die fliek was.
6. 'n Vriend van my wat met sy familie daar was, hy het gevoel dat daar vanaand iets groots gaan gebeur.
7. Die klomp bikers was by hulle fietse gewees.
8. Hulle het so traag hulle helms opgesit.
9. Die volgende oomblik toe bars die manne daar by die fliek se deur uit en hulle bestorm die klomp motorfiets van 'n kant af.
10. Hulle skop die fietse om, slaan die fietse en hulle drywers met die klein piksteeltjies dat jy net hoofligte en helms sien waai.
11. Hulle het so vinnig toegeslaan en onttrek, ek dink daardie bikers soek nou nog na hulle.
12. Hulle het om die hoek verdwyn op die Samil 100 gespring en onttrek
13. Die slag van TCL fliek was verken, beplan en uit-

gevoer deur kaptein Pain en skutter Van der Mest met die Skurwe Hande.

Ek het die Maandagoggend na kolonel Thomasse, die hoof van die polisie gegaan om te hoor of hulle al die skuldiges gekry het. Sy antwoord aan my was hulle soek nie verder vir getuies soek nie want hulle, die bikers het gesoek daarvoor en hulle was in eie munt terugbetaal.

Hoe ek die storie uit die knape gekry het. Ek het vir die manne gese daar is 'n polisie ondersoek. Die eenheid kan hulle nie beskerm as ons nie die waarheid weet wat gebeur het nie.

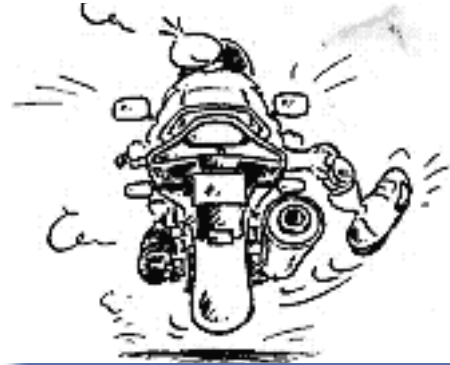
Pain het vir my gese 'n man slaan nie aan 'n onskuldige 61 Meg troep en kom daarmee weg nie.

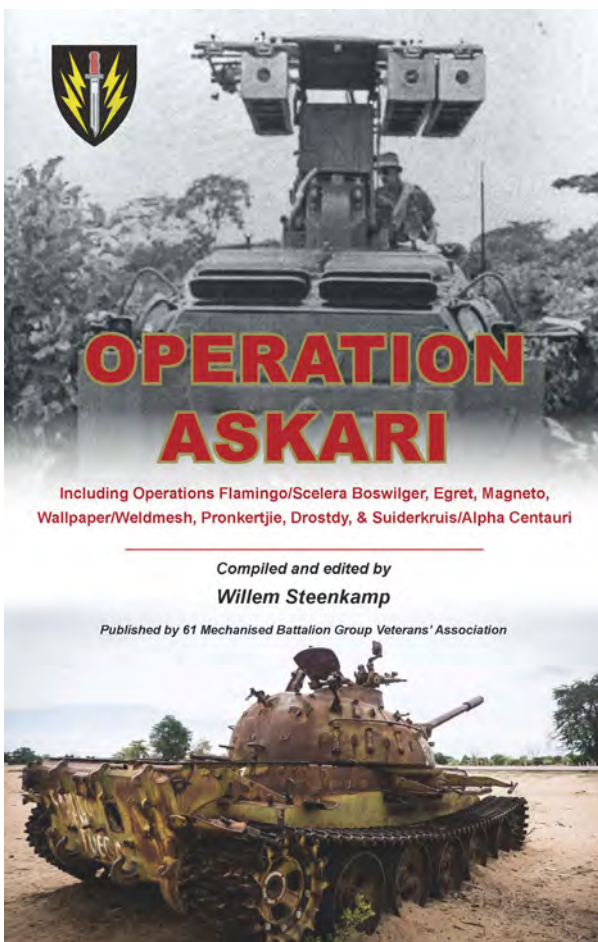
Raai raai die nuus het soos 'n veldbrand onder die

troepe versprei en die Skurwe Hande het as die helde uitgestap.

Wat toe op 61 gebeur het, die troepe het nie meer goed rondgegooi en gemors nie, die Skurwe Hande het hulle uitgesorteer.

Van daardie dag af het ek met ander oë na my klein groepie wat 'n groot taak in die basis verrig het, gekyk.





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Ter Nagedagtenis/ In Memorium

EULOGY - Mark Hume

9 July 2022



By

Eugene Mostert



And this is what you were Mark, a great guy, a social happy gentleman, loving the ultimate monthly skouer-skuur, the Moth parades or the Remembrance Day parades over the years with your buddies.

I will remember Mark as a shining light, a guy who respected all and a guy with a small heart.

And who did Mark Hume admire the most, it was no one else than General Roland de Vries, the commanding officer of 61 Mech during his service, and he would always talk of him.

We have lost a great member of 61 Mech and so we say “Salute” and goodbye Mark Hume and may you rest in peace.

We shall remember Mark Hume as a father to his children, a brother to his 61 Mech brothers, and most sadly we have to say farewell Mark.

We all know this day will come, but for Mark it came too early. He still had so much to say and do with his family, his 61 Mech brothers and all the military veterans that he greeted every morning on his Facebook page.

Members will attest and I will attest that when we felt down a WhatsApp message would arrive - a simple “howzit buddy” and Mark would be there to help and guide.

Mark to you as a military man we salute you, you went all the way to Angola and back. Never would you openly boast about what 61 Mech achieved, but beware the souls that spoke nonsense or wanted to join as a 61 Mech vet. Mark would do his homework and the person was doomed.





Nico Beneke

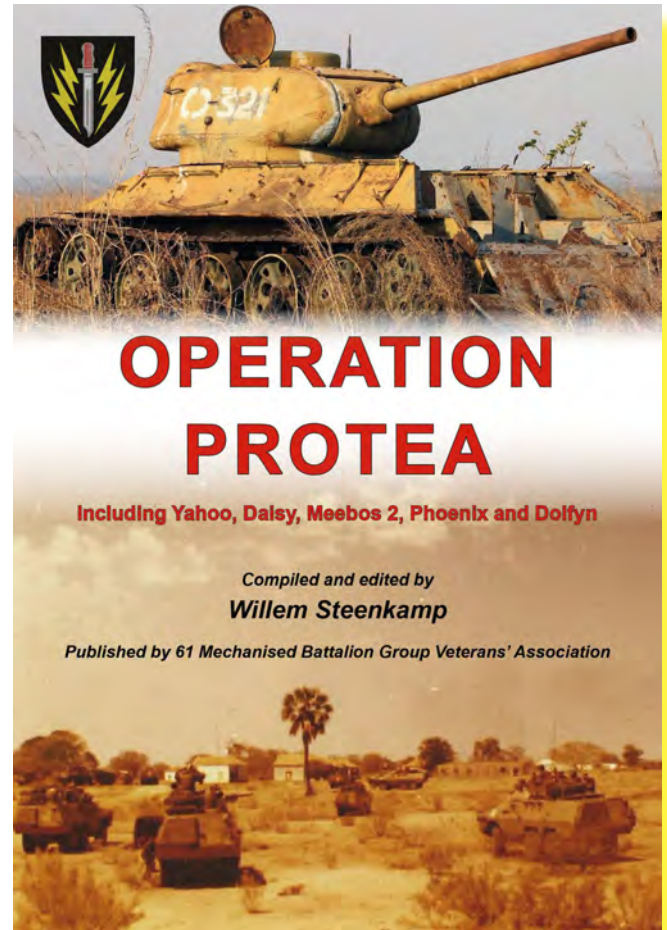
On behalf of ROOIPLAAS Paratrooper Veterans our sincere condolences to Mark's family, friends, colleagues and mates for his untimely passing. We are here today

to remember Mark's larger-than-life personality and the legacy he leaves on earth. Mark had an exceptional talent in storytelling, reflecting moments, reminiscing about the 'old army times' and helping us find meaning, laughter and humour in the mundane.

He was a popular, well-respected and well-loved 61 Meg Veteran. Mark regaled us with his expressive stories at any function or 'kuier' and had witty comebacks for almost any conversation. He had an inherent ability to bring all military veterans together, sharing remembrances and posting stories and photos. He kept the memories alive of his time at the border and honoured those who gave their lives in the service of this country.

Some say it's what you leave on earth that shows what you did with your life. You lived a couple of lifetimes in this life, Mark, touching lives wherever you went. I want you all to remember that Mark was one of the best people you may ever have had the honour of meeting. Mark, you were a first-class ambassador for the Rooiplaas Paratrooper Veterans, and we are honoured to have called you a dear friend and a close brother. "At the going down of the sun, and in the morning", we will remember you, Mark.

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EULOGIE - Hugo Amos van Zyl

Deur Iris Erasmus 25 July 2022



Hugo Amos van Zyl is gebore op 22 Maart 1962 te Vredenburg in die Wes Kaap. Vanaf 22 Februarie 1980 het hy deur die range gevorder. Vanaf 1981 tot 1993 was hy te 8 SAI Bn gestasioneer. Oor die jare 1994 tot 1996 was hy by Groep 23 en iver vanaf 1997 tot 1999 die RSM van 117

SAI Bn. Hy is verplaas na 61 Meg Bn en het aldaar as RSM tot die sluiting van die eenheid in 2005 gedien. N sy staandemag loopbaan begin was die RSM van 61 Meg te Lohathla vanaf 2000 tot 2005. Sy afsterwe op die ouderdom van 60 jaar laat 'n groot leemte.

Hy was ten alle tye 'n soldaat wat net die beste gegee en dit ook verwag het.

This world, however beautiful, was never meant to be
The place that we would call our home for all eternity.

And though we would not choose to leave, a loving
God knows best,
And in His time, He lifts us to a place of peace and
rest.

For He has built a mansion where His children will
abide,

Free from pain and sorrow, forever at His side.

And though there may be many things that we cannot
explain,

We can be sure it breaks His heart to see His children's
pain.

In loving arms, He bears us to a quiet place apart
Where He mends the wounded spirit and heals the
broken heart.

And though these ones we love so much have left our
present sight

And passed into a better world of majesty and light,
Someday we'll be together in our Father's home
above

Where we'll thank Him for His mercy and praise Him
for His love.



EULOGIE - Andre Martin

Deur Niel Bruwer



Die Flossie land in Roooikop.
Bang en opgewonde stap ons
agter uit met ons gear oor die
skouer gegooi. Ek moet skie-
lik 'n hand voor my oë gooi
toe die woestyn son my hard
in die geslig slaan.

Dit is einde 1989 en ons jong
JL's is opgevlieg na 61 Meg
toe. Skielik maak die opge-
wondenheid plek vir onseker-
heid en ja, ek sal dit se, vrees!
Op Rooikop is dit ghaos.

Stukkende voertuie word by
die hoofhek ingesleep. Ouma-
ne loop met n gatvol houd-

ing rond in die basis. Browns is nie meer "brown"
nie...maar nou so vaal Khaki.

Ek voel moerse uit met my splinter nuwe Kpl strepe.
Ou manne strek nie, kyk jou net so aan asof die kat
jou daar ingedra het.

Maar een person staan uit vir ons Kpl's. Tussen die
ghaos loop daar iemand rond en kry beheer oor alles.
'n Budgie Gunner Samajoor. Klere verblyk maar baie
netjies, AO1 Martin is in beheer!

"What you are looking for Laddy?"

Ek skrik my gat af!

Hy praat met ons, se Bouwer, 'n jong Kpl met die ken
van 'n boks kampioen. Ag my fok...wat nou?

The canteen is over there, and AO Martin points us
to a little building on top of the hill. "Call all the new
Cpls together and meet me there"

This was the first time I met him. Little did I know at

By

Niel Bruwer



that point the impact this man will have on my life.
There are many stories I can tell you about our be-
loved Sergeant Major Martin. But I am not telling
them today. I will leave that for future publications.
He was a giant of a man and became an even bigger
legend years after the military. Right until his unfor-
tunate passing away a couple of months ago I was in
almost daily contact with him. He was our Dad away
from home. Gentle but do not mess with him. All his
Cpl's will remember the feared words "I will come
down on you lick a ton of bricks laddy"...dan was
daar kakkas!

Other than my Dad he probably had the biggest in-
fluence on me being a Military Veteran. Hy joined all
our groups, including the Infamous Geroeste Ysters
where he had us in stiches most of the time. An abso-
lute gaint of a man.

He never finished writing that book we begged him to
write. That is probably one of the biggest losses to our
beloved 61 Mech. That man had stories and he could
tell them in such a modest way. I respect and love all
off my "makkers", but...This man I truly loved like a
father.

I have no more words, just tears.

Until Valhalla RSM!

To Auntie Lorraine, thank you for sharing him with
us. Thank you for loving him like you did and thank
you for still being just a phone call away!



EULOGIE - Eugene Wiese

Deur J Liebenberg (Kilo Bravo)

EUGENE WIESE TROOSDIENS

Vrydag 09 September 2022

Bloemfontein Baptiste Kerk



Tyd: 10:00 - 11:00 Laaste Eerbetoon
11:00 - 12:00 Troos Diens

Plek: * Bloemfontein Baptiste Kerk
* van Blerk laan, Groenvlei, Bloemfontein
* Vanaf Blyn na Langenhovenpark, Groot Kerk
aan regterkant.

Drag vir Veterane: * Veterane drag met Beret
* Groot Medaljes

Ek het hom vir die eerste keer ontmoet so in 1978/77 tydens ontplooiing na Ruacana.

Hy het 'n besondere werks etiek gehad en as hy eers vat gekry het aan jou het hy 'n lojaliteit gehad wat vir niks geskrik het nie.

In 981 was hy weer my kompanie Samajoor vir die laaste gedeelte wat ons by 61 was en Askari saam gedoen het. Toe ek in 1988 opdrag gekry om 8 SAI bataljon te omskep na Meg toe, toe hulle vir my vra



wie wil ek hê as 'n was my keuse sonder huiwering AO ! Wiese.

Saam het ons die eenheid paraat gemaak en operasies uitgevoer. Saam het ons die eenheid omskep in iets waarop almal trots kan wees en wat seker een van die lekkerste jare in my loopbaan was.

Toe ons oorgeneem het op Oshivello het ons nie LBT gehad nie, ons het baie min kombuis personeel gehad. Ek het vir RSM Wiese gesê- dis jou probleem, en hy het dit gevat. Elke naweek na opleiding het dit gemaal daar by die LBT, ons het nie tiffies gehad nie, maar Maandae was die voertuie diensbaar en ons het aangegaan met opleiding> Dit was die kaliber mens wat Samajoor Wiese was.

En sal sy lojaliteit, sy vriendskap en sy harde werk altyd onthou. Sy eshelon was altyd sy trots, die netheid van sy basis was altyd sy trots. Hy het alles altyd veil gehad vir sy onderoffisiere en sy troepe. En as hulle dit nie kon kry nie, kon niemand dit kry nie. Daarvoor dank ek die lieue Vader vir 'n man soos hy wat in my lewe gekom het.

Dan wil ek afsluit en sê dat Samejoor Wiese, kan nou maar sy passtok neerlê en hy kan in vrede rus.



*Ondersteun asseblief die ondersteuners van die 61 MVV
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Bravo Kompanie 1987 Slagveld Toer

Bravo Kompanie 1981 - Die volle Verhaal

1 SAI Bataljon se rol in die vorming van 61 Meg Bn Gp

Die ontstaan en groei van Club Omuthiya - Dekade van Groei



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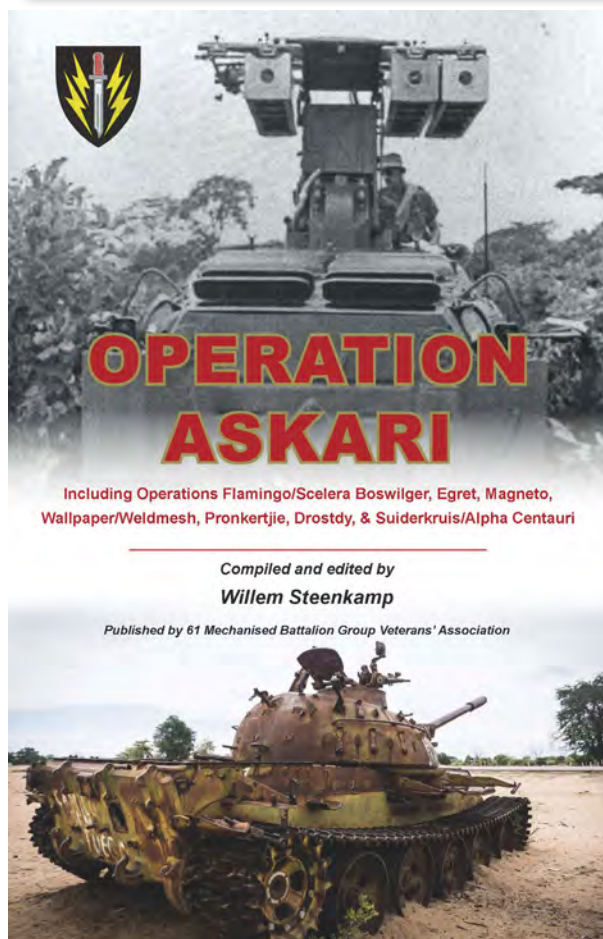
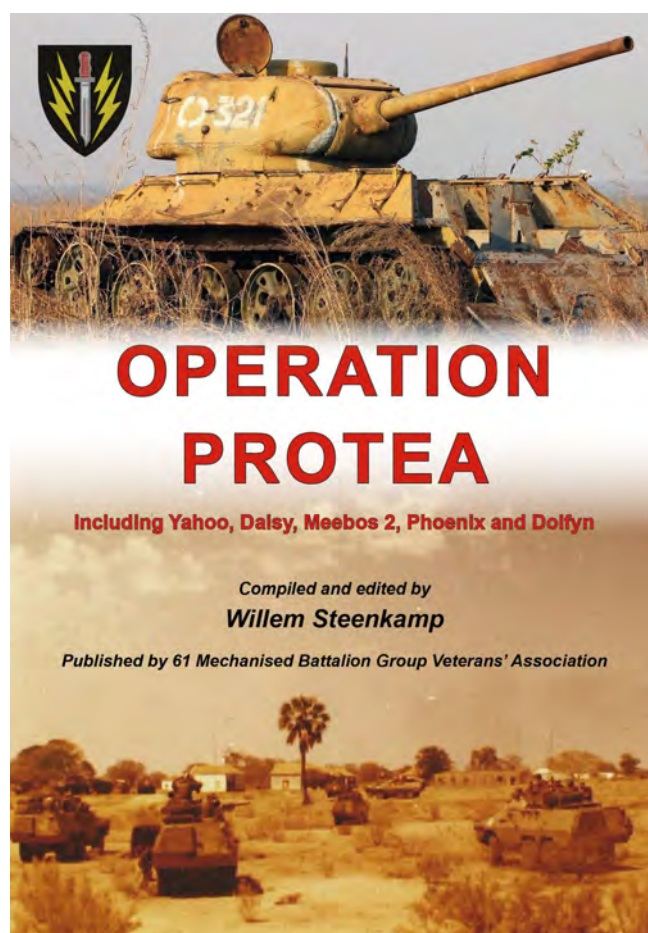
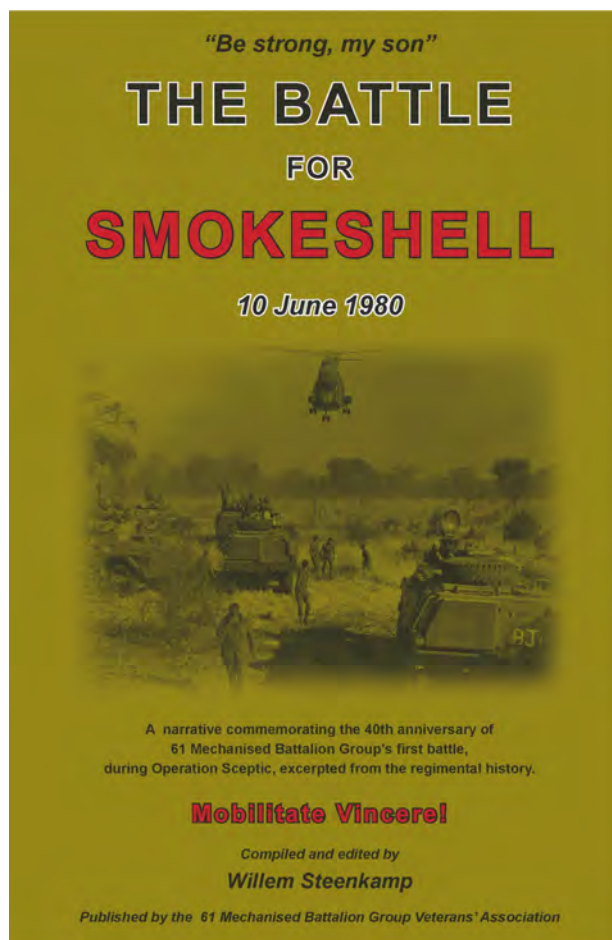
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Critical Timelines

22 December 1988:

South African, Cuban and Angolan government representatives met to sign the New York Accords better known as the Tripartite Accords.

The agreement saw the initial withdrawal of 3000 Cuban soldiers.

The date for the implementation UN Resolution 435 was the 1 April 1989.

SADF forces were to be reduced to 12000 men by six weeks before the 1 April and confined to two bases in SWA/Namibia before being reduced to 1500 men twelve weeks later.

SWATF and the area-forces were to be demobilised and their arms and ammunition placed under guard. PLAN forces were also to remain confined to their bases from the 1 April.

31 March 1989:

Marti Ahtisaari, UN Special Representative to UNTAG was informed by the South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha informed Marti Ahtisaari that South African Military Intelligence had been monitoring the presence of 500-700 PLAN soldiers north of the South West African (SWA) border and that 150 PLAN insurgents had already crossed the border contrary to the New York Agreement of 1988.

Ahtisaari did not believe SWAPO would violate the treaty and therefore did not believe Pik Botha's briefing, but still informed the UN Secretary General of the allegations.

1 April 1989:

On the night of 31 March / 1 April a thousand PLAN insurgents were stationed just north of the border. They carried personal weapons and heavy arms in the form of SAM-7's, mortars and RPG-7's and infiltrated at a number of places over 300 km apart.

By 6am thirty PLAN insurgents and two policemen had died in the first contact. Pik Botha phoned Secretary General Perez de Cuellar to inform him that

SWAPOL could not prevent the incursions and if UNTAG could not contain the situation, the confined SADF units would be released from their bases.

2 April:

Ahtisaari reluctantly agreed to release a limited number of SADF units. 101 Battalion was the first unit to have its troops recalled and rearmed. 102 Battalion, SAAF helicopter gunships and 61 Mechanised Battalion would soon follow. At the end of 2 April the death toll stood at 130 PLAN insurgents and 10 SWA policemen.

3 April:

Ahtisaari addressed the Security Council on 3 April concluding that SWAPO had infiltrated across the border violating the ceasefire.

4 April:

Pik Botha stated to the Secretary-General, that more than 1000 PLAN insurgents had crossed into SWA/Namibia, with more PLAN forces based on the border and were ready to cross. He said unless something was done now, the peace agreements could collapse.

5 April:

Ahtisaari proposed a ceasefire to SWAPO and the South African government.

6 April: An emergency summit of African Front-line States agreed with the UN Secretary General's ceasefire proposal.

7 April:

UN member countries began to increase their efforts to speed up the arrival of UNTAG forces in Namibia.

8 April:

Sam Nujoma announce that SWAPO had instructed PLAN insurgents in SWA/Namibia to stop fighting and regroup to withdraw under UNTAG escort to Angola.

9 April:

The Mount Etjo Declaration agreed to by all those parties present. The declaration stated that all parties agreed to the existing peace agreements and that PLAN insurgents withdraw to nine border assembly points maintained by UNTAG forces, to be in place by 11 April, and then transported to places above the 16th Parallel in Angola.

20 April:

It was agreed to return SADF and SWATF units to their bases in seven days.

26 April:

Death toll - 289 SWAPO, 27 SWAPOL, SWATF and SADF members.

27 to 29 April:

South African, Cuban and Angolan representatives agreed that 13 May was the date when SADF and SWATF units would be confined to bases.

29 April:

200-400 PLAN insurgents were said to remain in Ovamboland and the South African forces were again released from their base with more PLAN insurgents killed after 28 April until 13 May. The final death toll climbed to 306 PLAN insurgents while on the South African side, had been finalized at 20 policemen, 5 SADF/SWATF members and over 100 wounded.

19 May:

The South African's, Angolan's and Cuban's released a statement stating that all SADF/SWATF units were now confined to base and that the fighting was over and the implementation of UN Resolution 435 and the independence process would resume.

By the **26 June**, the SADF had withdrawn all its troops except for 1500 soldiers who were confined to their bases at Grootfontein and Oshivelo and would remain there until a week after the announcement of the election result.

7 to 11 November:

Voting.

14 November:

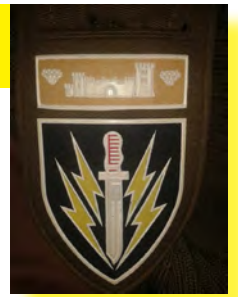
Ahtisaari, declared the election as free and fair and announced the result. The result of the election left SWAPO as the winner of the election with 57.3% of the vote.

By the **21 November 1989**, the last remaining 1500 soldiers of the South African Defense Force, based at Grootfontein and Oshivelo, were withdrawn from Namibia.





BRAVO 1989



Veni - Vidi - Vici

*Die laaste Bravo Kompanie
61 Gemeganiseerde Bataljongroep
Die Bosoerlog Era*



*The last Bravo Company
61 Mechanised Battalion Group
The Bush War Era*



Our Story Ons Verhaal

Deon Jordaan & Fanie Kotze



HK / HQ



Pl 1



FOREWORD

This is a brief history of Bravo Company, 61 Mechanised Battalion Group (61 Mech), of 1989. It reflects the facts, perceptions and memories of the last Bravo Company of the Bush War era, as recollected 33 years later. We tell our story, with acknowledgement and utmost respect to all other units and sub-units that walked the path with us, before us, and after us. Some recollections may have been included in **MOBILITY CONQUERS: THE STORY OF 61 MECHANISED BATTALION GROUP 1978-2005**, by Willem Steenkamp & Helmut-Römer Heitman, but are necessary to be repeated here for perspective and completeness.

It was the year of Resolution 435, UNTAG, April fools, South West Africa (SWA, later Namibia) elections, withdrawal of the South African Defence Force (SADF) from SWA, and the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Our wish is that this concise, bottom up, time-restricted effort (with content in both English and Afrikaans) would act as catalyst for a comprehensive effort, allowing wide participation, to be published in an appropriate format. The effort is primarily as remembered from a conscript perspective (reflected as recalled, warts and all) and would require a thorough top down revisit during such a comprehensive effort. A mountain of information and perspective is waiting to be added and clarified.

Such an effort could also be of great assistance to Gen Tony Savides in his endeavour to compile the wider Operation Merlyn story.

Deon Jordaan



Special thanks to:

Dawid Lotter - for the motivation to make thoughts and discussions into a first-step reality.

Craig Benn - for the initiative to create a WhatsApp Group to collect a lot of memories, exactly for this purpose.

Pl 2



Pl 3



BRAVO COMPANY – 1 SAI BN



Our story is incomplete if we do not briefly reflect on our training and experiences as Bravo Company, 1 South African Infantry Battalion (1SAI) of 1988.

Captain Christo Terblanche took command of Bravo Company shortly after the onset of 2nd-phase training, after basics. He made immediate impact with his introductory speech, and made it clear that he and Lt Riaan Gray, as company 2nd-in-command, would train us based on their direct operational experience in the Angolan bush.

The somewhat surprising presence of, and SADF clashes with the Cuban 50th Division in 1988, changed the impetus of our training. Training focussed on conventional warfare and standard training facets like riot control and Counter Insurgency (COIN) Urban were left out in order to get us battle ready ahead of schedule.



Training was tough but fair, and resulted in an exceptional performance evaluation during the Sweep-slag Exercise at the Army Battle School at Lohatla. Platoon 1, 2 and 3 became the core of Bravo, while Platoon 4 and 5, with the exception of HQ function troops, were eventually posted somewhere else.

Following the Lohatla phase we left on a seven day pass and were told to take all unnecessary items home, which pointed to possible early deployment. Meanwhile, a new junior leadership group was being trained at the Mechanised Leader Wing. They would join us in late in 1988 to lead us as we transferred from 1SAI to 61 Mech.

1 SAI DEPLOYMENT

Deployment was indeed on the cards. Weapons and 1SAI specific items were handed in at the Quartermaster Stores and the advanced teams left Bloemfontein for SWA on 19 October 1988. The advanced teams consisted of a junior leader core, section leaders, gunners, drivers and HQ platoon members. The flight to Grootfontein was on a SAFAIR Boeing with proper air hostesses – something we would only experience again on clearing out in middle December 1989.

The heat on arrival at Grootfontein was a physical shock to the system and we quickly got rid of our bush-jackets and rolled up our shirt sleeves.

The ride to Omuthiya, on the back of Kwê 100 trucks, was long and will not be forgotten for two reasons – the baking sun, and the feeling of unease, as we had not been issued weapons or ammunition yet. Passing through the Oshivelo gate to enter the operational area did bring a feeling of excitement though. The advanced team pitched tents inside the fence to the north of the Bravo Company lines at Omuthiya, sharing the ablution block with our “ou manne”, the (then) current 61 Mech Bravo company.

We kept much to ourselves, as instructed. They looked like a rough bunch and the evidence of their endeavours near Quito Cuanavale and the brief but intense interaction with the Cuban 50th Division was clearly visible. We could only listen in amazement to their stories when we did dare to interact. The advanced team received Ratels, trucks and platoon weapons to be ready for when the main 1SAI force arrived a week or two later. After allowance to accli-



matize, shooting in weapons and general preparations we broke down our tent camp on 20 November 1988.

On 21 November we deployed operationally to the east of Eenhana, over a wide East/West front between the Angola border to the north, and “Oom Willie se Wit Pad” to the South. The Bravo convoy driving on the “Wit Pad” for the first time brought a sense of reality as the number of burnt out land-mine related wrecks left a definite impression – especially to some of the echelon personnel issued with Samil 50 (non-landmine resistant) trucks.

The deployment included trackers from 101 Battalion, many adventures and incidents, luckily none of which were critical. These adventures should be included in a later, more comprehensive effort to tell our Bravo story.

Although no serious incidents occurred we have to acknowledge Nico Lange, who broke his wrist by the shock on the steering wheel as his Kwê 100 truck struck a hidden tree stump as we bundu-bashed our way to a suspected target kraal. Respect Lange! This deployment also included Lt “Luitesant” Gerhard van Rensburg as stand-in company 2IC for Lt Riaan Gray who was transferred to 61 Mech and had to go clear out from 1SAI. He was a much feared officer at the Mechanised Leader Wing but his professional transformation from “training mode” to “operational mode” was unbelievable. Interaction with him under operational conditions was memorable.

We returned to Omuthiya a few days before the previous intake had to clear out at the end of their conscription period. Ratels and trucks were signed over to elements which formed 63 Mech, who resided just outside the Omuthiya base for a short period. The new junior leader group arrived and after a short

overlap the old left on 11 December, along with Lt Gerhard van Rensburg.

The 1SAI contingent had a parade a day or two before the old intake had to clear out from 61 Mech. As we marched past on the northern side of the 61 Mech Bravo Company lines on the way to the parade ground we received a barrage of swearing and derogatory comments from the ’88 “oumanne”. This changed all of a sudden to silence and then to shouts of encouragement. “Bravo Company, you will still get far!” We quickly realised that our “abusers” saw Captain Terblanche and Lt Riaan Gray marching with us, and the immediate respect was clear.

The platoon NCOs made a collection and presented a few bottles of “refreshments” to Captain Terblanche to see him off. He showed great appreciation and left us with these words (spoken in Afrikaans): “Men, you are not going to leave here before shots have been fired.”

On 13 December 1988 the previous intake cleared out at 61 Mech and we cleared in as the new Bravo Company. Vehicles and platoon weapons were signed over to us as well as the contents of the company store. It was a hectic, semi-chaotic day as the “ou manne” just wanted to get home but the job got done. Our 1SAI days were over.

61 MECH BN GP: PRE - APRIL 1989

Unit Structure

The intention is not to present a detailed 1989 structure in this book. The unit of approximately 900 souls was commanded by Commandant Mike Muller and supported by RSM Kobus Kemp.

The 1SAI mechanised infantry of Alpha and Bravo Companies were transferred as such to 61 Mech. Charlie Squadron, with 90mm Anti-Tank Ratels, were later to integrate with the mechanised infantry in battle during the April debacle.

The unit further consisted of HQ Company (HQ operational personnel, unit medics, technical services (tiffies), chefs, logistics, stores, etc), 81mm Mortar platoon, Anti-Aircraft battery, G5 Artillery, Assault Pioneers and the Tankers. If memory serves correctly, all sub-units remained a permanent part of 61 Mech, except for the tankers, whom rotated periodically.

Bravo Company Structure



***Company Commander: Kapt, then later Maj Frans van Tubbergh
(2018 Photo)***



Company 2IC: Lt Riaan Gray



Company Sergeant Major: Sergeant Hans Swartz



CSQM: Cpl Nick van Beeck

Platoon 1



Commander: 2/Lt Auret Vorster



*Platoon Sergeant:
Cpl Willie Coetzee*



*Platoon NCO:
Cpl Jaco Vos*

Platoon 2



Commander: 2/Lt Jaco Cronje



*Platoon Sergeant:
Cpl Willie Cloete*



*Platoon NCO:
Cpl Arie Mooiman*

Platoon 3



Commander: 2/Lt Johan Stals



*Platoon Sergeant:
Cpl Leon Engelbrecht*



*Platoon NCO:
Cpl Harry Wessels*

Note: Photos were taken shortly after joining 61 Mech. Some of our brothers changed roles and some are unfortunately not present on the photos.

Training

Much of the time in the run-up to April was spent on re-training. This included everything from hand grenades, section fighting drills, trench clearing to integrated exercises with the Olifant tanks and joint exercises with 63 Mech. The Cuban 50th Division was not forgotten by our leadership and the apparent peace with SWAPO was not fully trusted. (It must be noted that we as conscripts were blissfully unaware of the Cuban threat, for which we were specifically training like we did). Training exercises included an impressive demo to UNTAG representatives who showed up in the run up to implementation of UN Resolution 435. (Specific recollections regarding UNTAG will be discussed later in this write-up.)

Mass Drivers Course

Part of the training included a mass driver's course in the unit. This was as a result of the UN requirement that all South West Africa Territory Force (SWATF) units had to be disbanded. They were equipped with armoured infantry fighting and logistic vehicles belonging to the SADF and these vehicles had to be driven back to South Africa at some stage. Of interest is that AO2 Ben Smit of Bravo 87 fame was still part of the unit and participated in the training and evaluation of the course participants.

Of interest is that this period included a component of 32 Battalion staying in the base for a short period, making their vehicles available for the driver training. Their tents were pitched to the North East of the Bravo Company lines, sharing the Bravo ablution block. We salute 32 Battalion - our brothers in arms. The resultant convoys driving back to South Africa had its own Bravo tragedy which would be discussed later.



Tsumeb Womens Association (Tsumeb Vroue Vereeniging)

The Tsumeb Womens Association was a patron organisation to 61 Mech. One day they visited the Omuthiya base and brought along a mass of cake, tarts, coffee, tea and cold drink to feed the whole unit. The heartfelt and emotional gratitude showed during the speech from the chair-lady, calling us "their sons", still ranks as the top "thanks" of the very few we ever received. We will not forget you.

Media

Representatives of the SA Magte/SA forces publication visited the unit at some stage and Platoon 1 was instructed to demonstrate some drills, including trench clearing and a mock attack, with infantry; Ratels and tanks integrated. This was for the purpose of video and photos intended for publication.

2/Lt Aurret Vorster onthou:

"Die demo het gemaak dat ek die Maandag op kantoor-houding by Kmdt Mike Muller was oor verontagsaming van 'n wettige bevel. soos beweer deur die majoor van die tenks. Hy wou al die smoke generators gelyktydig skiet terwyl die infanterie uitgestap was en tussen die tenks en Ratels geïntegreer was, want dit sou 'n mooi panoramiese foto maak!!! My donner!! Die standaard bevel was vuurgordel aksie, stop, stap terug, hatches toe en dan eers wit rook. Duidelik ken hy nie sy werk nie en sal ons manne verbrand het met die fosfor. Hy skree toe op my en toe onttrek ek van die demo. Kmdt Muller het my weergawe uitgeluister toe roep hy die majoor in en skree op hom. Ek het hom nooit so kwaad gesien nie."

Paratus also visited Oshivelo during the later part of the year.





Merlyn Forces

The UN facilitated an agreement that the SADF had to reduce its numbers drastically, with only 1500 SADF members allowed to remain in South West Africa around six weeks after the implementation of Resolution 435 on 1 April 1989, and to remain till just after completion of (hopefully) free and fair elections.

Resolution 435 defined proposals for a cease-fire and UN-supervised elections in SWA (then still controlled by South Africa), which would lead to eventual independence for SWA/Namibia. With the disbandment of the SWATF and withdrawal of most other SADF units from SWA, it effectively meant that the 900 odd members of 61 Mech would form the fighting force nucleus of what was to be named the Merlyn Forces. A command and support element would also be stationed at the Grootfontein military base.

Part of the agreement was that 61 Mech would become base-bound at a specific stage pre-April. This caused a lot of frustration due to the monotony of the base routine and constant rumours of strange SWAPO activity, despite Resolution 435 agreements.

Cpl Deon Jordaan recalls:

“At a stage it was Bravo Coy’s turn for base clean-up duties. I was the unfortunate NCO on duty. One of the platoon sections was assigned to do the dirty work of emptying dustbins and to provide protection on the way

to and from the refuse dump. My truck’s driver, Stanley Barker, hitched the refuse trailer to our beloved 29F3 (Kwê 100 truck) and off we went.

This was during the time that UNTAG forced us to remain base bound just before the implementation of Resolution 435 and the dreaded 1st of April 1989. Being restricted to the base is not good for any mechanised force, or troop for that matter, and frustration levels were a bit high.

So, I had one look at the assigned section and knew I had trouble. Being part of the echelon as company storeman, trying to handle a platoon section and their section leader was not all that “easy” either. Well, we did our duty and set off to the refuse dump a short distance to the north of Omuthiya. We hardly stopped when my suspicions were confirmed – being pressured from all sides to allow them to “shoot a bit”. I initially didn’t agree, being a responsible corporal and all – considering that we needed to find replacement ammo from somewhere and not being sure whether we were really outside earshot of the base. I knew I was on the losing side and, to be quite honest, the idea started growing on me too. Eventually we lined up the guys facing in the safest direction according to our judgement and then all hell broke loose. Never was a refuse dump attacked with so much aggression. I also had my turn doing the “GV” thing of emptying a 50 round magazine in one go, with one arm – and it felt great!

Stanley also wanted in and, having left his weapon locked in the base, got his turn with mine. At a stage, after emptying many magazines, he gave me back my rifle and it took me only a split second to know why. It was so hot from all the rounds fired on automatic that you could hardly touch it, even on the plastic parts. The closest reasonable place for me to put down the extremely hot piece of metal was the front wheel arch of the Kwê. Big mistake – as it was made of plastic and the barrel promptly started melting into it! When I realised it I literally had to climb up and break it free from the plastic.

We ran out of ammunition shortly after and I could see that it was mission accomplished. Through the dense clouds of shot up dust I could see smiling faces with laughter and high spirits all around. Lots of pent-up frustration was released and Ops Refuse Dump was a great morale boosting success.

Although fearing repercussions for our actions, we never heard a thing about it and even managed to replenish our ammo in some way. The only “punishment” I got

was scraping rock hard, burnt plastic of my gun barrel till virtually the day I had to hand it in!"

Bush Leave

1 April crept closer and some sub-units, including Bravo Company, were allowed to go on a 21 day pass, to return in groups on the days before and on 1 April. A number of key personnel were also participating in a rugby tour, to return only sometime after 1 April. This would have specific influences on the events following 1 April.

Rfn Craig Benn 22A recalls:

"The 31st of March 1989 will be a day that lives with me for ever. We had just spent a long time at home on our so called bos verlof. I spent most of that time drinking, jolling and surfing at my favourite breaks in and around Port Elizabeth. The morning of the 31st I woke up at my folks place and had already packed my Balsak as we were scheduled to be picked up at Port Elizabeth airforce base by Safair flossie taking us back to die grens. My mom made me a breakfast probably suitable for a king.

I was very agitated that day for some unknown reason and snapped at my poor sisters for some unknown reason. My dad pulled me one side and asked me what the fuck is going on and I said nothing. I was nervous about going back. The war was over as far as we were concerned so I thought nothing about it. I ate that breakfast but as soon as I finished it this nauseating feeling came over me and I ran to the toilet and projectile cotched that breakfast my poor mom had prepared for me all over the bathroom floor. I could not figure out what the fuck was going on because I wasn't even hung over. This weight just seemed to overwhelm me and as the morning carried on it just got worse.

Those last few hours with my family absolutely just dragged on. It felt like days. I just wanted to get the he'll out of there. I couldn't wait to be amongst my army buddies again. We loaded up and the trip from Bridgemeade to the airport was about a 20 to 30 minute drive. What I remember was that it was eerily quiet in the car. Now people who know my immediate family will know - ons kan nie fokken stil bly nie ons praat kak, en die grootste komp kak ook, - but the car was quiet. When we arrived at the airport to drop us off I noticed that there was a sombre mood all around. Obviously people were sad to see their troepies go off to the grens but the war was over

we had missed all that kak in Angola, thank God, so there was no need to worry.

I remember seeing CC Botha hanging to one side with his girlfriend. Now CC was a character himself but he kept to himself and sort of acknowledged me with a nod of the head and a small smile.

The Egerdorfer brothers were there but also unusually quiet, and Jacques van Rooyen as well. I felt a type of tension and wondered if they felt the same as me. It must have been hell as these guys had made the trip from East London to PE. I can recall Marius Beck also standing one side. Can't remember much more than that. I can hardly remember the flight back to Grooties except for a lot of kak praat about bush pass and how lekker it was. We arrived at Omutiya on the 31st March 89 probably around 1800. We had made the trip up from Grootfontein on those Kwevoel trucks, bloody uncomfortable but that's was maar the life of a troeple. It was good to be amongst the manne again. Remember talking shit about the pass to Troy Hosking and think it was Brian Drake our section 2IB. Not all the members of our platoon were back. Buks our driver had to remain back in the states for some personal reasons.



OPS MERLYN

1 April, 3 April and Beyond

Saturday, 1 April 1989 came. As it was weekend most permanent force members were at their accommodations in Tsumeb. Most troops returned from pass during the preceding days and were still wearing their flashes and stable belts (“lappe and flappe”). Kit was being handed out, while main armaments, platoon weapons and rifles were still in the company store. Somewhere during the morning rumours started of random leadership arriving in base, that SWAPO crossed the border and that we had to prepare.

It was simply hard to believe and the April Fools idea took hold. Deployment was thought to be a joke and preperation by most troops followed suit.

Rfn Craig Benn 22A recalls:

“Think it was Staff Sgt Crawford that came into our lines and told us we must start drawing kit and bombing up the cars - “en reg maak vir oorlog want die kak het weer gespat en Ovamboland is vol terts”. I remember Troy started laughing as the staff left our tent and said “ya right its April fools” and we left it at that. It was only

when RSM Kemp came through our lines and started kakking us all out that there was some form of organised chaos.

Fuck what a rondfok, draw R4s, ammo, get all your webbing, staaldak, etc from stores. Pack your personal belongings in sections in the stoor kamer and only a few personal things and spare uniforms in your Balsak allowed to be loaded onto the logistieke trok.

What the moer was going on now, the war was supposed to be over? Is this a rond fok or was it real? Fuck, Buks is not back, do I become the driver of 22A now?”

Kit was handed out, sorted and the unwanted kit handed back to the company store. Weapons were handed out and the Ratels bombed up.

Rfn Steven Jonker, 22C recalls:

“I had the pair of browns on my back and a rain coat for that deployment. I remember we had 2 tooth brushes in the whole of 22C. Yes, we all used them.”

2/Lt Auret Vorster recalls:

“I had one pair of underpants (actually a Speedo that I swam with earlier) and no warm clothes. Only grabbed the one bag that was still unpacked, coming from leave

Map 61: An Overview of Operation Merlyn



two days before. Maybe that is where Faf the Klerk got the Speedo idea from.”

Bravo Company deployed that night at approximately 18:00/19:00, after sitting waiting in the vehicles for hours. Politics had to first take its course for UNTAG to allow us out of the base. Approximately 1500 heavily armed PLAN fighters have crossed the border during the night of 31 March/1 April, with SAWPOL (the South West African Police) and KOEVOET bearing the brunt of contacts since the morning of 1 April.



Rfn Fanie Kotze, Gunner 22B recalls:

“We arrived back at 61 Mech base from pass on the 1st of April, somewhat depressed for having to resume our duties there after a good couple of weeks spent home. It was good to see faces again with lots of stories shared from adventures in civvy street.

Walking into Bravo lines, in between greets and handshakes, was an underlying murmuring of SWAPO having crossed the border in masses. With a mass infiltration of this nature not expected, it was quickly put down as rumours by most, blaming the management structure for doing this on purpose to scare the “civvy hounding” out of us after our long pass. As the day drew on, confirmations were received with more seriousness and once we received orders to draw weapons and load ammunition for us to move out later, a somber worry started to set in amongst us.

By late afternoon we have given in our kit and were fully “bombed up”. We were ordered to the Ratels, where we sat and waited for hours. Motors idling, filling the Ratel

with that all familiar smell of diesel and the singing of the engine drowning out the chatter which reduced to the occasional couple of words as time went on. Hungry already, I was nibbling on snacks my mother packed me, thoughts very much still at home, but now filled with a sadness for having to sit there cursing whoever contributed to this stuff-around we are now part of.

We left base after dark and it felt like ages, Phillip “Swannie” Swanepoel our 22B driver trying to stay on track with the tracks in the sand and the red dot from the Ratel some meters in front of us. Eventually we set up a TB very far north from where we started, going through the motions of securing perimeter. No lights or smoking allowed, troops started digging foxholes, but the ground was hard and I gave up after shovelling away some weeds and decided to settle inside the Ratel where I could also smoke in peace.

The night was uneventful and after “Klaarstaan” dug into our ratpacks, whereafter we spent 2nd of April on patrol the whole damn day. At first, we were all very vigilant expecting to come across SWAPO at any time, but as the day drew on with the mind numbing hum from the engine and sun blazing down on the Ratel, we were slowly getting baked into a stupor.

We had some fellows from 101 Battalion that joined us, which included some trackers that accompanied us, these guys most of the time on top of the ratel getting the fully glory of the South West African sun.

That night same routine and I don’t think I even put shovel to ground, headed straight for the Ratel.

The morning of the 3rd started off without breakfast, since we were only issued with 1 x day rations which was mostly devoured the previous day.



We had a ball with the Ratels' water supply and brushed our teeth, some even washed up, since we were heading out to meet up with log vehicles for refuelling, rations and water.

After spending a few hours on the move, at around 9am we came to an abrupt stop when we stumbled upon the spoor of numerous feet and even bicycle tracks

Once again fired up with an anxious excitement, we started following the tracks with intermittent stops as 101 would re-affirm the trail and direction of movement.

As the day progressed, Koevoet Casspirs joined us and took the lead in hunting down the tracks. The expectation of imminent contact grew as we got updates through the radio headsets from where the spoor initially reported as a day old changed to the spoor being a couple of hours old.

The tracking went on for the entire day and the terrain started changing to denser bush, witnessing the spectacle of Koevoet at work. With the spoor getting fresher by the minute, Koevoet trackers started jogging as we picked up pace. Trackers dropped back behind the Casspirs when they were tired, getting relieved by rested guys that were catching their breath in the open back doors. I was astounded by these guys' stamina and now that I think back to that moment, was like watching a pack of wild dogs hunting; seeing their pace increase from a walk to a jog as they sensed their prey getting nearer.

Not having had the luxury of receiving rations for the day or even filling up our water reservoirs, the day became like a slow Chinese torture as we were getting hounded by hunger. It was late afternoon, asking Lt.



Grey when we were going back to camp; telling us to hang in there, we will retreat by sunset. He kept our spirits high with these supporting words of rest and well deserved dinner after the day's work and gave me a sense of ease knowing that he will look after us.

At around 5pm, as I was standing on the gunner's seat leaning back against the hatch, an Alouette gunship passed over us and I grabbed my camera taking a picture of it in great haste and managed to capture a blurred image which can only be identified as a helicopter if you know it had to be there. I intently watched the chopper, which circled a couple of hundred meters ahead of us and then stopped, suspended in mid-air like a hawk having spotted a rat in the bushes below. With the headset on my head, only hearing the Ratel engine humming, watching the Alouette sway to the right; move back a couple of seconds later only to sway out again and that was the last I saw of it.

The next moment, twigs and leaves get ripped from a small tree, about 10 - 15 metres from our Ratel and the realisation of bullets ripping past us sank in with a rush of adrenalin and I still can't remember how quickly I got into the gunner's seat with hatch closing above my head. Following was a couple of seconds of chaos and then commands coming in with urgency... We drew attack position with Koevoet (Casspirs) in between the Ratels, moving forward at fairly slow pace until the "stop" and command for fire was given. The Alouette was called in to force SWAPO to stop and take cover, allowing us to engage before sunset.

Looking through the gunner site, there was nothing to see but bushes and trees with no point of reference, zero depth perception to position my sights on a target that has already engaged with us. "Vuurgordel aksie" command was given and hell was released on an enemy that has been running for survival most of the day, getting showered with 90mm Skroot, 20mm rounds, 50 brown-ing and 7.62mm rounds from multiple vehicles on full automatic fire. I was squeezing the fire buttons for .50 Browning and 20mm rounds as we were taught; a short burst Browning followed by 2 - 4 rounds of 20mm. Repeating the routine over and over. I could not see target however and alternated view from aiming sights to sight-block trying to find the right trajectory, getting guidance from Cpl PW Becker in the command seat next to me.

Ceasefire was commanded to us and the Koevoet Casspirs rushed in. Not engaging the enemy at the time, I was watching these Casspir gunners tucking their heads



behind the armor plates, guns pointing down at an angle, going into the contact zone blazing on full automatic. Casspirs driving in circles/"figure eights" in, around and over the enemy, machine guns not stopping until the ammo boxes were depleted.

Casspirs would then drive out of contact area back past us; reloading behind our defensive line then coming back into the contact zone firing in the same manner; bullets hitting the ground in between our Ratels before they even enter the death arena again. Strange how the detail stuck from that day. (It could be speculated that this manner of fire initiated through our line as Casspirs re-entered the contact zone, could be how Lt Els lost his life to friendly fire; getting mortally wounded in the back of his head.

In hindsight it was evident that going into contact without any form of prior / joint-exercise with Koevoet resulted in the organized chaos with dangerous exposure. The contact / battle tactics were worlds apart, which each unit has perfected on its own accord, over many years of experience, yet never expected or intended to collaborate on this level.

After the contact broke and several insurgents having fled, Koevoet swept the area picking up the remnants from a battle that was an intense baptism of fire for Bravo 89 and most of the other units/sub-units involved.

We followed through with another sweep of the area and apart from splinters and broken bush, no signs of fighting was visible on the ground. Only saw a mangled up bicycle, which brought some reality back into the scene and a thought of the anguish SWAPO soldiers must have felt, briefly entered my thoughts which I quickly brushed

aside with anger from the news we received earlier of casualties on our side. Looking at him later while he was making sure everyone else is okay in the aftermath, the expression on Lt Grey's face has become part of the emotional reflections I have from this day. From the calm, always-friendly, supporting face, I saw a side of the man which made me realise that even though he was our "father" he also was only human and was deeply affected by mortally wounded Lt Els.

Later that evening after we pulled back and set up camp again; in the silence of the night, reality of the day set in reflecting on the day's events. A bustle of recollections shifting from pure excitement to total dismay at the casualties on our side, and the anger of loss on our side. Major van Tubbergh was furious and we were not to work with Koevoet in this manner again.

Patrols continued after this and although we had a couple of intense situations, never came to contact again.

One patrol, we also picked up spoor close to the cut line, but had to stop as we were not allowed to cross the border to continue the hunt. Disgruntled at the time, yet a blessing in disguise as we later found out a Cuban armoured contingent was laying in wait a short way into Angola."

Kpl L. Bezuidenhout, Pl3 Ops Medic, onthou: "Gedurende ops Merlyn was ons kompanie deel van Lt. C. Els se Tank Afweer support. Dit het eerlikwaar ewe skielik geklink of die hel los is. Skote het geklap en jy kon hoor hoe ons Ratel soms getref word. Die Casspirs wat ons ondersteun het, het in 'n agt-vormige patroon gery en goed soos krekters by die "hatches" uitgegooi, natuurlik om die vyand se koppe af te hou. Ons peloton 3 bevelvoerder op die oomblik was Kpl. Cloete. Kpl. Cloete het van die Kompanie bevelvoerder, Lt. Gray gehoor, as ek reg kon onthou, dat daar 'n persoon geskiet is en ons moet ondersteun.

Kpl. Cloete het vir my geskree om Lt. Gray te help wat klaar by die Ratel 90 was. Ek weet net ons Ratel deur het oop gegaan en ek het uit gespring en hoor hoe skree Lt. Gray op my om bo op die Ratel 90 te kom en hom te help. Dit was erg want toe word daar eers geskiet, natuurlik om ons te beskerm. Ek kon Lt. Els in die Ratel se toring sien waar hy afgesak het en tussen die deur en die drywer in gegly het, daarom dat hulle nie die Ratel deur kon oopkry nie. Ek en Lt. Gray het Lt. Els aan sy panser uniform opgetel en uit die toring getel waar ons hom van die

Ratel afgetel het en hom op die grond neer gelê het. Ek het toe eers gesien dat hy in die kop geskiet is. Die volgende oomblik was die helikopter, 'n dokter en nog twee medics op die toneel. Die dokter het dadelik beveel om Lt. Els in helikopter te kry. Hulle het hom "gecasevac".

Ek is terug na my Ratel waar ek verneem het dat Kpl. Cloete in die hand geskiet is en hy by die kompanie medics was. Almal in die voertuig het daar gesit - woordeloos. Ek het begin bewe en kon nie glo wat so pas gebeur het. Dit het alles deur my kop gemaak. Lt. Els se gunner was so geskok en het so gehuil. Die drywer wou help maar kon nie want Lt. Els was half bo oor hom. Ons het die kontak punt verlaat maar dit het soos 'n ewigheid gevoel.

Ek het die volgende dag verneem dat Lt. C.Els oorlede is..."

Sktr Mike Craven 23A, Dryver, onthou:

"Ek onthou daai dag soos gister wat Lt Els geskiet is. Ek het hom nog een oomblik in sy Ratel se toring sien staan toe sien ek hom net val in sy Ratel in. Ek dink ook dit was een van die Casspirs wat hom geskiet het. Ons het in 'n uitgespreide linie gery, dan draai hulle om en kom weer van voor af. Ek het baie al gedink en onthou hoe ek die patrone van voor af op die grond sien aankom het en die volgende oomblike hoor jy dit teen die kant van die Ratel. Hulle het daai dag 'n verligting of fosfor flair op my Ratel 23A laat ontplof ook. Ek sê nie baie oor daai dag nie, maar sal dit nooit vergeet in my lewe."

Rfn Craig Benn 22A recalls:

"What I remember about that fateful day was the driving for hours in formation just driving and driving. The guys were calm but driving looking out the front windscreen I was a bit nervous as I wasn't the proper driver for 22A and had been trained as a geweer sktr and only a hulp drywer. They only taught us to drive the damn Ratel to keep it moving. I knew fokol about the formations like twee op box linie 3 op and all that kak. I used to watch Buks drive and being sktr one, paid attention to what he did but was scared I would fuck up here.

We proceed along and in the late afternoon all hell broke loose. I just kept the car pointed forward and 22C was on my left. I just said to myself keep in line with them and follow what they do and all should be OK. Brian Drake was in the turret as section leader and gave Troy instruc-

tions to let rip with the browning. I just heard a clank and Troy screaming "storing, the gun is fucked up." At that stage a Koevoet Wolf turbo was making just off to our left front going in circles. One of those poor terrors was under a bossie getting hammered by the cops. Next moment I noticed movement to our front in the bushes. By that time Troy let rip with the 20mm and I started giving him teiken aanduiding shouting to the left to the middle to the right.

Think he fired about 6 round in total when we got kaked out from a dizzy height to stop with the 20mm. Brian was letting rip with his R4 from the tower. Then we heard that someone had been shot. Fuck, who now?

Our formation had stopped and I looked to my left and I saw guys running with a stretcher and some guy's head was bandaged and then casavacing a guy. We then moved forward and I struggled to keep the car in a straight line. I shouted to Drake I think we got a flat front wheel. We stopped and checked and - ya die tyre was moertoe geskiet, fucking Koevoet with the drills. Now we had to change the tyre just driven through a contact and still terrors about, fok but we changed that wheel in record time.

We caught up with the rest of the formation and were in a line formation. Troy turned the turret, I got out and sat there having a smoke thinking, fok what just happened?

We returned to Ogongo where we had laargerd and the guys of 22C showed us where the car had been hit a couple of times."

Sktr Eugene Magson, 21A Drywer, onthou:

"Ek kan nie veel onthou van daai dag nie, net soos Aurret gesê het van die bevelvoerder wat gesê het van die drywer en die gunner wat moet kyk wie eerste die terrors kon kry, Ek het daai oggend nog gedink al die tyd word ons geleer die gunner en drywer moet saam werk..Stop en as daai Ratel stabiliseer dan klap die 20mm en Koppies, my gunner is in die kol. Nou ry ons in formasie soek terrors, kyk deur die venstertjies. Alles is toe, dit is hel warm binne in daai Ratel, en daar kry 21A 'n pap wiel. Ek sê vir Kpl Burger, my seksie leier, hy moet stil bly. As hy gaan iets sê gaan hulle ons ontrek en ander insit. Ons bly ry met die pap wiel en daar kom dit op die radio 21B het papwiele. Ons (21) word onttrek. Daar het ons verniet met 'n papwiel 'n hele ent aangery en Pl 3 gaan in ons plek in. Dit was 'n helse ervaring om daai bande te vervang

terwyl die skote klap voor ons en in die verte.”

Sktr Leonard Van Schoor, 21C Sktr 5, onthou:

“Ja 21C het ook ‘n pap wiel gekry maar ek dink ons Kpl was dankbaar vir daai papwiel. Ek dink Poolstok ons drywer wou ook aanry.”

2/Lt Aurret Vorster onthou: – Die Lang Stilte:

“n Paar dae in Ops Merlyn in hoor ons dat een van 63 Meg se Ratels uitgeskiet was. Ons het teen die tyd ook al vir Lt Chris Els ons Vegspan 21B verloor. Vegspan 2 word getaak om ‘n groep van omtrent 250 PLAN insurgente te gaan aanval. Goed bewapen met RPG’s en ander goed wat seer maak. Ons ontvang bevestigde inligting dat hulle op een van drie moontlike ruitverwysings ingegrawe het in ‘n TB. Nou in retrospek is alles so veel duideliker want as dit bevestigde inligting was sou daar net een RV gewees het, maar nou ja ons beplan ‘n eerste lig aanval op RV 1.

Die vorige aand slaap jy soos ‘n baba want as jy opkyk is die sterre nog steeds net daar waar hulle so 15 minute terug was, en dan slaap jy weer rustig verder vir die volgende 15 minute.

Ek dink ons moes teen 4h00 opstart en ry. So 3h30 die oggend toe ek die eerste fluit vat seil ‘n slang tussen deur my bene en ek was hom mooi skoon sonder dat ek of hy kwaad is vir mekaar. Dit het seker maar vir hom gevoel soos ‘n lekker warm stort op ‘n koel April nag. In die bos waardeer jy sulke klein luukshede.

Gou ‘n bid parade gehou onder my Ratel se dowwe groen liggie. Vinnig ‘n slegte ratpack koffie afgesluk, almal sterkte toegewens en maar in stilte ‘n ernstige gebed opgestuur en gehoop vir die beste - want HKGK vandag nog!

Aangekom op die eerste RV net voor eerste lig en die RV koördinate is in die middel van ‘n shona. Nie eens ‘n swaar gewapende donkie in sig nie. Wonder bo wonder is RV 2 se bevestigde koördinate ook nie akkuraat nie.

Nou is ons seker hulle moet by RV 3 lê en wag. Ons eerstelig aanvalsplan en verrasings element is toe lankal van die baan. Soos ons nader beweeg word die terrein al hoe meer ruig met ‘n paar klip koppies in die omgewing. Baie beter geskik vir ‘n TB.

Nou met die min slaap, die herfs sonnetjie wat so lekker

warm begin bak en die adrenalien vlakke wat sedert die oggend se vermaak al baie gedaal het, begin die aanmars nou effe lank raak en ek effe moeg raak.

My gunner “Slaghuis” wou seker uit pure ordentlikheid my nie onderbreek het wat vir hom moes gelyk het na ‘n lang gebed net voor ons kontak gaan maak nie. Op daai tydstop bid baie ouens baie lank, party bid saggies, party bid hardop, party bid somer saam met die ou wat langs hom hardop bid in Afrikaans en Engels gelyktydig - net vir ingeval. Dit hang seker maar af van watter kerkverband jy afkomstig is.

Nou terwyl ek so aandagtig bid hoor ek nie die bevel dat die Ratel 90 langs my een rondte skroot moet afvuur in die rigting waar die TB waarskynlik is nie. Die veronderstelling was dat die terr’s dan terug sal begin skiet en hulle posisie sodoende sal weggee.

Die volgende oomblik word ek wakker geruk met ‘n mense knal baie naby aan my.

Ek val so stamp stamp in die toring af soos my knieë meegee onder my en beland so half bo-op die drywer. My klein brein sê vir my dit was ‘n RPG wat ons getref het, maar soos ek in die kajuit inkyk bid almal rustig voort. Terwyl ek terugklim in die toring met die headset wat so skeef sit soos die pos tiffie se beret, probeer ek met Slaghuis praat - maar niks - my lippe beweeg maar geen sein nie, net stilte!

‘n Leeftyd se stilte!

Hy kyk my so aan asof ek professionele hulp nodig het en al wat ek hom wou vra is “WIE DE DONNER HET GESKIET?”



Puik Parade deur 61 Meg en GP

31 Mei 1989 Nuusberig - Bron Onbekend

TSUMEB — Terwyl die SA Weermag besig is met sy grootskaalse onttrekking uit SWA/Namibië ten einde die vredesplan se toepassing te bespoedig, is dit 61 Gemeganiseerde Bataljon wat Republiekdag hier in die noorde van die land kon vier met 'n luisterrike vlaghysingsparade.

Die immergroen velde rondom — Omathiya-basis het hom byna teen die natuur verset toe die ritmiese voetval van stewels een van die kleurrikste medaljeparades aangekondig het. So wat 1000 manskappe van 61 Gemeganiseerde Bataljon het aan die parade deelgeneem.

Die goeie gees van die troepe en hul parate houding het veral beïndruk en hierdeur is die bataljon se beeld weer verbreed. 'n Woordvoerder van 61 Gemeganiseerde Bataljon op Tsumeb, lt Riaan Gray, het gesê dat hierdie een van die grootste parades is wat tot dusver in die operasie-

nele gebied gehou is. Maj Lawrence Maree was die paradebevelvoerder terwyl kmdt Mike Muller die medaljes oorhandig het.

Opmerklik genoeg was die tevreidenheid wat die bevelvoerder van 61 Gemeganiseerde Bataljon, kmdt Mike Muller, aan sy troepe oorgedra het. In 'n kort en kragtige boodskap het kmdt Muller die manne gelukgewens en ook gesê dat hul meer as hul deel bygedra het. Hy het ook gesê dat hulle trots moet voel aangesien hulle deel uitmaak van die 1 500 soldate wat hier bly om die vrede en veiligheid van inwoners in die noorde te waarborg.

In koud weer het die troepe van 61 Gemeganiseerde Bataljon hul positiese houding teenoor die SA Weermag geopenbaar deur skerp te vertoon. Die vlac van die Republiek van Suid-Afrika 61 Gemeganiseerde Bataljon asook die verskeie sub-eenhede is

hiertydens vertoon.

Dit is 'n uitgemaakte saak dat 61 Gemeganiseerde Bataljon 'n gevegsmag is waar trots die wagwoord is. In die verlede het die bataljon hom reeds verskeie kere bewys deur

die onbaatsugtige diens wat hulle aan die gemeenskap van Tsumeb en omliggende dorpe gelever het asook talle suksesse tydens operasies.



Die troepe van 61 Gemeganiseerde bataljon op parade. In die agtergrond kan drie G-5 kanonne gesien word.

Uittreksels uit die Paratus van Oktober 1989:

ABSOLUTE paraatheid en gevegsgereedheid van die laaste Suid-Afrikaanse soldate in Suidwes-Afrika het 'n groot mediagroep begroet tydens 'n onlangse besoek aan die Operasionele Gebied. Die persbesoek, waarskynlik die laaste voor die gebied aanstaande maand sy onafhanklikheid kry, is gebring aan die militere basis by Oshivello (61 Gemeganiseerde Bataljongroep). 'n Groot gedeelte van die laaste sowat 1 500 RSA-soldate word hier gehuisves voordat hulle ingevolge die onderhandelde skikplan na onafhanklikheidwording na die Republiek terugkeer.

Tydens die besoek wat op versoek van die media plaasgevind het, is by die infanterie-, artillerie- en pantservleuels aangedoen. Die persgroep was deurentyd vergesel van die Bevelvoerder van 61 Meg Bn, Kmdt Mike Muller, en lede van die UNTAG-vredesmag wat by die basis gestasioneer is.



Die Bevelvoerder van 61 Meg Bn, kmdt Mike Muller (derde van links) in gesprek met lt kol Yunos (derde van regs), terwyl ander lede van UNTAG bystaan.



A01 Jan Holliday, Sersantmajoer van die SA Weermag, wat die besoek meegemaak het, het die geleentheid benut om die troepe toe te spreek en self te sien hoe dit met hulle gaan en hoe hulle opleiding vorder. Hy het dit duidelik gestel dat standarde nie verslap kan word nie totdat vrede werklik in Suidwes-Afrika tot stand kom. Aan die troepe het hy gese: “Julie is hier op Oshivello om te verhoed dat ondemokratiese magte oorneem en hul wil op die inwoners van die streek afdwing.”

Na afloop van sy toespraak het A01 Holliday die podium verlaat en informeel met die manne gesels en na hul welstand verneem - 'n gebaar wat duidelik baie deur die troepe waardeer is. Daarna het die fokus verskuif na 'n statiese uitstalling van verskillende infanterie-, artillerie en pantserwapens wat deur die SA Weermag gebruik word. Vir die avontuurlustiges onder die groep persmante was 'n rit in 'n Olifant-tenk waarskynlik die hoogtepunt van die besoek. 'n Vleisbraai saam met die offisiere en manskappe van 61 Meg Bn, asook lede van UNTAG en waartydens almal gesellig verkeer het, het die dag afgerond. (Outeurs Nota: Daarvan het ons niks gesien of geruik nie!!).

Spiritual Deployment Support

2/Lt Aurret Vorster onthou:

“Ons het 'n PF kapelaan gehad en 'n DP dominee - vol luit. Die dominee was 'n goeie bedroglose ou, maar hy sou nou nie 'n rol gekry het in 'n Rocco de Wet - Grensvegter boekie nie. Ons was al seker so twee maande besig met Ops Merlyn. Teen die tyd klap die skote lankal nie meer nie en ons ry net patrollie en donkies. Die donkies was gevaarliker.

So kom die dominee en vra of hy asseblief saam op



patroillie kan kom. Seker ook maar nafi vir die basis lewe by Ogongo. Ek sê ja dit is reg so en maak vir hom plek as die tailgunner in 21C en gee vir hom 'n headset sodat hy darem iets kan hoor. In die een oor blêr Radio 5 en die ander oor is die Vegspan en Peleton frekwensies.

Maar daar is reëls tydens ontplooiing:

Reël 1 - hy moet nie inmeng in die peloton sake nie.

Reël 2 - hy moet nie aanstoot neem oor die taal gebruik in die peloton nie. Die meeste ouens bid darem en vra om vergifnis vir hulle sondes voor hulle gaan slaap.

Die volgende oggend vroeg rapporteer hy vir roll call, maar sonder sy pips aan. Hy sê as hy op patroillie gevang word en as KG aangehou word, weet hy van niks. Hy is net die "acting blank file" hier. Ek prop hom in die Ratel in voor RSM Snorre hom te siene kry.

So start ons op en toets die seine. Dadelik wil iemand weet wat is die korporaal se sussie se bloed groep en ander tersaaklike inligting, en ek weet vandag gaan dit vir die dominee voel of hy deur die dal van die dood skaduwee gaan.

Elke keer as iemand iets te sê het oor die vroulike lede van Ben Burger se stamboom druk iemand net die kieskassie se knoppie en maak sy keel skoon - sonder om 'n woord te rep.

Dankie Dominee jy was 'n uitsonderlike tail gunner."

Herewith also sincere Bravo apologies to any Padre, who did not last long on most Ratels, with special mention of Platoon 2, including call sign 22...

Sktr Fanie Kotze, Kanonnier 22B onthou:

"Daai Kapelaan het een oggend baie vriendelik en opgewonde in ons Ratel kom klim op een van ons patroillies. 'n Paar vriendelike woorde gewissel soos ons regmaak om die pad te vat. Die Bravo manne was uitsonderlik still vir 'n minuut of twee, maar toe die wiele begin rol, sak daar 'n 22 Bottelstoor gemak oor die klomp skutters en die man se keel skoonmaak kon nie keer aan die uitgebreide woordeskat nie. So paar klieks innie bosse in (toe ons vir 'n wyle stop), het die man homself by ons verwyder en ons het nooit weer van hom gehoor of hom gesien nie."



Further adventures

Kpl Arie Mooiman 22, Pl/OO onthou:

"'n Storie wat ek graag wil vertel wat ek nog nie met baie mense gedeel het nie - Toeval of 'n hoër hand besluit self: Ons (peloton 2) het eendag suid van Umbulanto patroillie gery. Ek het bo op die spaarwiel en camo net gesit. Die volgende oomblik toe slaan die Ratel se radio antenna my teen die kop. Ek kyk op en sien ons is onder deur 'n telefoonlyn, iets wat redelik skaars was. Soos ons ry, seker so 10-15km, loop die draad al langs die pad. Ons kom toe by 'n cucashop en almal koop koeldrank en wat nog. Ek sien toe die telefoonlyn stop by die winkel. Daar was 'n foon eenkant in die winkel. Ek vra toe of ek kan bel en die vrou se ja, R5 vir 'n kollekteer oproep. Ek bel toe my ma (eerste keer na ons van pas afgekom het), sy sê ek is so bly jy bel, "ouma is is vanoggend oorlede."

While the platoons were deployed there was a bit of excitement back at camp very shortly after 1 April.

Cpl Deon Jordaan recalls:

"On 1 April 1989 when SWAPO crossed the border into SWA in breach of the stipulations of UN resolution 435. a number of our troops, including some sportsmen, were still on pass. So, when Bravo Company deployed I found myself left behind in Omut hiya along with the company clerk, Cpl WF Skibbe, commonly known as Skubbe, to sort out the kit and admin of the returning men. My job as company storeman (stoorboef) linked me to the store

with all the guys' kit, even though my heart was in the bush with my usual ride - 29F3, with Stanley Barker as driver.

Skubbe who shared a tent with me and our two IO's (Intelligence NCO's) Sean Clark and Johan Ferreira, was a fairly eccentric bloke of 26 years old, who apparently completed 6 years of medical studies and then inexplicably decided to do his 2 year conscription. He was also the only guy who could always wear a full beard for some obscure medical reason. Although our main functions were admin and logistics we completed our infantry training before being sent off to do the RNCO (Regimental NCO) course.

With SWAPO's antics we were ordered to sleep with our weapons under our pillows and with filled chest-webbing hanging over our bedposts. I also remember an information session where we were informed of a contingent of Typhoon fighters that was specifically tasked to attack the base. I remember wondering if it could be true or if it was just a stunt to keep us alert in the half empty base.

The Bravo lines were right next to the parade ground to the west and the Bravo ablution block and perimeter fence to the north. The HQ platoon tents were the furthest away from the perimeter fence. If memory serves correctly the anti-aircraft guys were next to us to the south and the tanker guys directly to the east. One night, around the time for lights-out, Skubbe and I were bickering about whose turn it was to get out from under the mosquito nets and to switch off the tent light. We were literally the only two guys present in the whole of the Bravo lines.

The next moment we heard bursts of automatic fire followed by a huge explosion somewhere in the base. The thought of being a target with our light still burning struck us simultaneously and we both jumped up and virtually bent the tent pole in efforts to get the light switched off! I remember jumping into my oversize Hang Ten slops, grabbing my chest-webbing and R4 with only one thought in mind...foxhole! On the way out of the tent I realized that the Tanker rofies just rocked up a day or so ago and were still a bit green about the base set-up. I ran to the first of their tents and I think I shouted something about getting into foxholes but then left in a hurry as I realized I left Skubbe on his own.

Skubbe and I very quickly found ourselves in the foxhole right next to the Bravo HQ platoon lines. The adrenalin

was absolutely racing. We realised that we couldn't see the perimeter fence properly and we slipped from foxhole to foxhole to get closer. We stopped at the second last foxhole, as the last foxhole was too close to the fence for our liking. I remember flicking open my R4 bipod across the sandbags and crouching down so as not to show too much of myself above ground. I remember feeling very responsible for Skubbe but with the adrenalin neither of us felt any fear, just an overwhelming (foolish?) feeling of being ready for action.

So, there we were in a very unlikely situation as sole representatives of Bravo... a storeman and a company clerk, in a foxhole, ready to defend the base!

In the meantime the rofie tankers responded and had the



base encircled with the tanks, with guns facing outward. One of the Olifant tanks were positioned about 20 meters or so to our left on the parade ground. All of a sudden all the tanks opened up with their Brownings and sprayed the bush with bullets. The adrenalin in the moment was incredible.

I remember telling Skubbe over and over: "Laat een f..kker net sy gesig wys!" (Let one f...ker show his face!) I was crouching behind the R4 in a very uncomfortable position, trying to hide as much of my tall body below the foxhole edge while remaining ready to shoot.

The next moment the bloody tank shot of its main weapon! To sit virtually right next to an Olifant tank and to experience the unexpected explosion of a 105 mm projectile being discharged is quite something. The shockwave made me cringe even further and in the process I hurt some of my rib-muscles that made it difficult to breathe for about 2 weeks! I can't remember exactly what hap-

pened after this but after a while we got the all clear.

To this day I do not know what the cause of the automatic fire and the explosion was. I wondered if it wasn't just another unannounced exercise to keep us alert or to test the tanker response. Apart from rumours of RSM Kemp being a "little" upset about the tank tracks destroying the surface of the parade ground we never heard anything about the incident again.

That was till around 2019, when a face-book post cleared up the mystery. The story goes something like this: The tiffies were assisting with the unfamiliar task of guard duty due to the lack of troops in the half empty base. Apparently a tiffie makes sure about things when there are strange noises in the bush. It may have been a troop of elephants that attacked the base and were promptly fended off by automatic fire and a hand grenade..."

After the fighting, and being confined to base again by UNTAG, Bravo Company temporarily settled at the old 52 Bn base at Ogongo. The selection of Ogongo was strategic and Maj Frans van Tubbergh indicated it as a good place for further operations should it become necessary. Its central location relative to the Angola border supported this principle.

Platoon 1 broke away from the company to look after the base at an old 53Bn base called Miershoop ("...a desolate base with a small swimming pool and a high mast..." as per 2Lt Auret Vorster) for a number of weeks.

The exact date of returning to Omuthiya still requires confirmation but may have been shortly before the end on May 1989.

UNTAG – UNITED NATIONS TRANSITION ASSISTANCE GROUP

Interaction and Break-up of 61 Mech Sub-Units

UNTAG presence was not very visible in the operational area during the fighting, especially initially. Although there were significantly more role players our exposure were typically limited to the Malaysians (as fighting force), Swiss Medics, Australians (engineers), and occasional views of the chopper pilots - from unknown origin.

There were initial frustrations with harsh words spoken as UNTAG representatives took some convincing that SWAPO broke the cease-fire agreement. The Malaysians were generally very friendly people who loved to take photos surrounded by the tallest South African soldiers. They were also the most visible part of the UNTAG contingent.

2/Lt Auret Vorster onthou:

"Ek verneem UNTAG was meer gereed (minder bang) in sekere gebiede as ander. Nooit een UNTAG operationeel gesien in April / Mei nie. Daar was 'n paar Aussies wat 'n hospitaal opgepas het naby Ogongo en 'n Huey helikopter wat die kaplyn gepatroleer het. Maar eers na die skote ophou klap het.

Daar was later so 'n verdwaalde Maleisier by die Os-hivelo basis. Nie veel met hom te doen gekry nie behalwe die aand toe hy moes saam ry want iemand het 'n paar terr's nady Dolfyn basis opgemerk. Moes deurnag elke uur daar gaan draai. My eers gevra om in die Ratel te ry, toe vir 'n R4 en manpak radio wat ek moes weier. Ek het hom gesê hy moet by die teerpad wag maar nee hy wou saam bundu bash. Hy was dood bang nadat sy Land Cruiser vinnig vasgesit het. My gesmeek om hom uit te trek en onderneem dat hy sommer by die basis sal wag. Bogger sy orders om ons te vergesel. Ek moet net aan hom kom rapporteer as ons terug is. Maar nie 'n onaan-gename ou nie. Moes net sy job doen en was nie lus vir drama nie."

Not a lot of interaction was possible with the chopper pilots or the Aussie engineers. The story goes that when the Aussie plane/s arrived at Grootfontein airport it represented a typical movie scene where soldiers jumped out of a moving plane to provide perimeter defence, only to be met with laughter from the onlookers. The Aussies had a good time messing with locals in the local pubs as, lo and behold, SWA already had well-developed infrastructure, including proper roads. Their UN funded engineering purpose was hopefully diverted to add some value somewhere. There was also an occasion where 19 year old SADF conscripts had to demonstrate the lifting of land mines to the typically much older professional Aussie soldiers. Some manipulative intervention was required by the commanding officers to save a bit of



face.

The Swiss medics were also a merry lot, with lots of party invites, hosted at their accommodations in the Grootfontein base. Friendships were forged and souvenirs exchanged, with the 1SAI green beret being top of the request list.

Some consternation was also caused. Swiss nurses did not immediately grasp that tanning topless at the Grootfontein swimming pool, in front of young men who just spent months in the bush, let alone not being used to such behaviour back in conservative South Africa, is not very wise. They received friendly requests from our leadership to rather cover up.

UN Break-up of 61 Mech Sub-Units

There was a UN decision to break up the 61 Mech sub-units. The reason for this is not clear. The various sub-units therefore split up around July 1989, following the April related deployment.

The Tankers remained at Omuthiya, while the artillery had to move to Dolfyn Base. The specifics regarding all sub-units were not further pursued for the purpose of this write-up.

Alpha and Bravo Company were moved to Oshivelo Base where we pitched 16x32 tents and lined the floors with wooden pallets. Life at Oshivelo was uneventful for most part. Bravo Company was assigned 5 spare Ratels for a period of time, left under the care of HQ Platoon. The notion of spare Ratels was a bit

confusing, even upsetting, as the implications could be construed towards the negative.

It is worth mentioning though that a Malaysian major of UNTAG was assigned to the base as observer and had permanent residence in one of the rondavels.

Packing up Oshivelo and Grootfontein

Some weeks before the elections of 7 to 11 November 1989 Bravo Company broke down their part of the base and left Oshivelo. The Company reported to Grootfontein. The base had to be packed up and days were filled with getting food, kit and ammunition loaded onto trains to be taken back to South Africa. What was odd is that while most canned foods were loaded, the tins containing meat products were left. We worked hard and enjoyed the fancy eating, from white plates, at the Grootfontein mess.

Elections

Cpl Deon Jordaan recalls:

“On one of the last election days Lt. Riaan Gray, our company 2IB, tasked me to grab two guys (Stanley Barker and Gerdus van Tonder, if I remember correctly) and to go to Brig. Serfontein (Commander, Sector 10) to help with packing up his HQ. I remember Brig Serfontein as a friendly man who interacted with us freely and with much respect - much like a grandfather would speak to his grandchildren. There was something in his eyes though that showed glimpses of the steel hidden inside and that he should clearly not be messed with. At a stage he called the three of us and showed us a host of memorabilia that he gathered, including some very impressive Cuban and Russian insignia (some, if I remember correctly originating from a chopper full of Russian/Cuban high brass that was shot down). He then opened a drawer with various different pieces of insignia and he allowed us to each choose one. To this day, I cherish the Polish military badge he gave me that day.

Packing up his offices meant that we were also within earshot of the army radio systems as they relayed the initial election results as they started filtering through. Result after result was in favour of SWAPO and it did not sit well with us for obvious reasons - including the fact that we had an info session where the Intel guys assured

us that SWAPO's chances to win were virtually zero. At another occasion of results being reported Brig. Serfontein was with us and he did his best to put us at ease, explaining that most of the results were from Ovamboland where most of the intimidation and influence of SWAPO were felt.

The next morning Bravo Company was standing in squad waiting for our company commander, Maj. Frans van Tubbergh, for roll-call parade. He came marching up with Lt. Grey and could hardly utter the words: "Manne, SWAPO het gewen." He just turned around

Last Days at Oshivello

and left. To this day I remember seeing the morale of the troops literally drop as proud statures instantaneously turned into drooping shoulders and faces with disbelief written all over it. We did not have a parade that morning. There was just a half-hearted command of "uittree" and we returned to our bungalows in a state of semi-shock and absolute disappointment."



WITHDRAWAL FROM SWA

The last to make the ultimate sacrifice - Convoy to RSA

On 17 November members of Bravo Company participated in convoys, driving military vehicles from Grootfontein back to the town of Upington in South Africa, this over a three day period. The convoys con-



sisted of multiple “packets”.

On the second day, 18 November, Rfn Robert A Gache became the last member of Bravo Company and 61 Mech of the Bush War Era to pay the ultimate price when the Kwê 50 truck he was driving left the road and rolled as a result of an embankment on the side of the narrow road.

On 18 Nov 2014 Rfn Willie Pieterse recalls:

“Today 25 years ago a convoy was on its way back to the Republic. A truck had an accident. I was in that truck and I survived. Gache did not. For 25 years I have re-lived that day over and over and over again and it still hurts like hell. SALUTE TO GACHE MY FRIEND.”

L/Cpl William Stopforth, recalls:

“I was first on the scene. Got to the Kwê - both doors where ripped off. Probably spent 5 minutes looking for Willie Pieterse. Found him lying in the bushes on the side of the road between all the stuff that was on the back of the Kwê. Drums of diesel, tyres, hand grenade detonators. I thought he was dead! Got a pulse, he was breathing, felt his spine for abnormalities - had very limited knowledge of first aid - but it's your buddy lying there. Your brother in arms. One by one the other cars pulled up. We took Robert out of the Kwê. Took about 4 of us. Despite his nasty head injuries, we still found a pulse. Some bloke in a sivvy car took Gash to hospital. I later

ended up there myself - checking on Piet. Badly concussed, Willie had no idea what just happened, asking the same question over and over. Then the news hit us! Rob didn't make it. I was devastated. So unfair. All the shit we've been through and a car accident takes my friend? RIP my buddy. You will always be remembered and honored for paying the ultimate price for your country.”

Last days at Oshivelo

South African forces had to be out of SWA by 24 November 1989. On 21 November Bravo Company left Grootfontein and returned to the operational area and slept in the now totally dismantled Oshivelo base for the next two nights. The purpose of returning to Oshivelo is not remembered. The primary activity was to ensure the serviceability of vehicles in preparation for the long road to Walvisbay. It was though the last full day and two nights that SADF (61 Mech) personnel officially spent in the operational area.

Last convoy out of the operational area

Cpl Deon Jordaan recalls:

“With Maj Frans van Tubbergh as convoy commander, we started our journey to Walvis Bay on the morning of 23 November as the last official fighting force convoy leaving the operational area. The emotion of this day was something I will never forget.

The uncertainty of the Namibian people staying behind as well as a realization of what we meant for many of them became very evident at a road junction somewhere before Tsumeb, where we turned off west to head for Walvis Bay. An old man and an old lady were standing next to the road beside an old dilapidated bakkie. The old man had an “Ampie-style” felt hat in his hands that was squashed into a shapeless mass against his chest. Tears were streaming down their cheeks and they kept on waving their arms in a manner as to chase us back north while shouting “Gaan terug, gaan terug!” (Go back, go back!). This evoked powerful emotions, including an intense feeling of helplessness. All I could do standing up in the Kwê 100 hatch was to shrug my shoulders and lift my hands in a show of helpless frustration and to give them a salute and a friendly wave.



At a stage we formed up next to the road for refuelling. A group of busses with SWAPO supporters came past and the aggression towards us was quite something. On a lighter note, the quickest reaction of conformance I ever saw was when one bus came past particularly slow with people taunting us and showing all kinds of offensive signs. That was until one gunner just about had enough and started swiveling his 20mm turret only a couple of degrees. The passengers all sat down with speed and precision that would make any military outfit proud....not a peep or an obscene gesture, all staring straight ahead in their seats. It did much to lift our spirits. This continued to set the tone for much of the rest of the trip – many people looking dejected as opposed to aggression from some SWAPO supporters.

We drove through the southern part of Swakopmund and I remember us passing something that I perceived to be a retirement village. It had a number of small houses in the complex with a low brick fence in front. Scores of old folk were lining the brick fence all looking forlorn and gloomy. Many waved and there were

lots of shouts of gratitude. The emotions it evoked were as strong as those experienced earlier the morning at the junction before Tsumeb. We soon turned south towards Walvisbay and as we neared those big signboards stating “Welcome to South Africa” our UNTAG escort had to get off the road to let us pass into the “States”. The abuse we got from Swapo supporters along the road didn’t get close to what the poor sods in the UNTAG Landrover had to endure as we passed. And then, as we passed through the booms to enter South African territory, all was forgotten for the moment and the shouts and jibes of pure joy continued from vehicle to vehicle for a long time. Desert sand meeting the sea never looked so great...”



Cpl Willie Cloete were acting CSM during the withdrawal as Sgt Hans Swarts were occupied elsewhere. His green Ratel, the last vehicle in the convoy in its usual place right behind the echelon, with Cpl Willie Cloete in the commander seat, was therefore the last vehicle to exit South West Africa into Walvisbay.”

Rooikop Base – End of an Era

We spent our last couple of weeks in the Rooikop base where we met up with our rofies, who just heard that their duty was reduced to 18 months. It had no effect on us as we knew that our 2 years were special. During our short stay we were also joined by Sgt Alfred Weise, who joined Bravo Company from the now disbanded 31/201 “Bushmen” Battalion at Omega base. The highlight of our stay at Rooikop was our “uitklaar” party at Langstrand – effectively an exercise of too much alcohol and too little meat.

We cleared out on 8 December 1989, with flights back home staggered between 9 and 11 December – an abrupt end to two years of comradeship and incredible adventures, which saw the end of the Bush War.

New generations of Bravo Company and 61 Mech were however waiting, with new experiences under still dangerous, but vastly different circumstances back in South Africa.

Brothers Bravo 89.

gone but not forgotten...

Sktr.	Greg "Skollie" Swanepoel	1988
Lt.	Chris P Els	03-04-1989
Sktr.	R A Gache	18-11-1989
Kpl.	Willem F Skibbe	15-05-1995
Sktr.	Clinton C "CC" Botha	01-01-1998
Sktr.	Hein Swart	27-01-2006
Sktr.	Mike Brummer	01-05-2015
Sktr.	Dennis "Woody" Wood	21-03-2016
Sktr.	Gert Nordejee	16-09-2016
Kpl.	Louis Smuts (Belinda, Gert & Paulina)	13-02-2017
Kpl.	Noel Egersdorfer	07-02-2019
Sktr.	Jacques (Rooibeer)	18-11-2019
Sktr.	Herbert van Riet	28-04-2021



My Verhaal van 1989 - Kpl Arie Mooiman



Aanmelding en Basies

Hierdie is my verhaal oor die jaar 1989 en die finale onttrekking van die SAW uit SWA. Ek het as PL/OO in Bravo Komp gedien. My ervaring kan die beste verstaan word as ek van vooraf begin.

Ek is opgeroep na 1 Onderhouds Eenheid Kimberley, tydens basies het ek besef ek gaan 'n stoorman of 'n drywer word as ek in die eenheid bly. Ek het bedluit om JLS te doen en rang te probeer kry.

By KD skool het ek besef ek gaan nog steeds in 'n stoor of 'n transport park opeindig. Toe die Meg Leier Vleuel toe keuring kom doen vir kandidate wat Junior Leier Opleiding in die Meg Infanterie wou ondergaan, het ek onmiddellik gevulenteer. Ons was toe so twee weke klaar met basiese opleiding. Die keuring het bestaan uit 'n onderhoud. Ek glo omdat ek in 'n plaas-omgewing grootgeword het en trekkers en voertuie gewoon was het dit in my guns getel. Verder moes ons die 2,4 km suksesvol aflê asook die ander fiksheids oefeninge. Sewe van ons is toe gekeur en ons het uitgeklaar en het per trein na Bloemfontein gery.



MLV

Die res van die MLV kursus was toe al so week aan die gang. Die kursus was aanvanklik in vier pelotons ingedeel. So die aantal studente was seker so 120 of bietjie meer. Dit was 'n groot groep want die MLV moes aan die einde van die kursus JL's voorsien aan

1 SAI, 4 SAI, 8 SAI, MLV se eie behoefte en dan ook aan 61 Meg. Hierdie eenhede was dan ook waaruit ons kon kies. Nie dat almal se keuses bevredig kon word nie. Dan is 'n groep aspirant Mortieriste ook In-fanterieskool toe vir JL opleiding daar. Ons het hulle eers weer gesien toe ons rang gekry het.

MLV het nie die tipiese groot kasernes gehad nie want dit was vroeër 'n meisie skool (Tempe Tigers). Ons akkomodasie was soos 'n tipiese koshuis. Ek as deel van die Spes kursus studente het in die koshuis-



blok agter die kombuis gebly. In die kamer waar ek geslaap het was ons agt studente. Maar die kamers was nie almal dieselfde grootte nie. Dan was daar ook tente na die watertoring se kant toe opgeslaan. Ons moes van die begin af kies of ons Pl Bev kursus wou doen of Spes kursus.

Die res van die jaar het ons sewe blou KDK berets gedra omdat ons nie basiese opleiding in 'n Infanterie



Eenheid gedoen het nie. Ons kon eers die groen beret gaan trek die dag voor ons rang gekry het maande later. So ons sewe het uitgestaan van die res.

Terwyl ons in Tempe was het ons gereeld die 2,4 km gehardloop. Die roete was van die groot hek, dan om die toring na die draaipunt en terug. Meesal met 'n Ratel buiteband, sleepers of teerpaal en soms 'n 45 gallon drom. Dan die spanbou wedlope teen tyd op die grondpaaie buite MLV.

Ons Spes studente het ook heelwat opleiding by Pantserkool gekry. Dit was 'n kwessie van drill met die pad af, woon opleiding by en dan terug na MLV. So het ons die bestuur en onderhoud kursus teoretiese fase by Pantserkool gedoen.

Ons het baie tyd op Debrug deurgebring. Ons kon daardie stowwerige vlaktes leer ken. Dit was bibberend koud op Debrug. Tydens een van ons klassifikasie skietbaan oefeninge was alles oortrek met hael. Daardie dag het dit gevoel jy vries tot op die been. Boonop het die wind gewaai wat die koue nog verder vererger het.



Pl Wapens

Ons het peloton wapenopleiding diep in die opleidings gebied in gedoen. Teen die tyd het ons die R4 reeds goed bemeester, maar die LMG masjiengeweer, die snotneus, die RPG en patroliemortier was iets nuut.

Ratel 20 Kanon

Tydens Ratel 20 wapenopleiding het die Spes Kursus kamp opgeslaan net agter die skietpunt. Die Ratels het in 'n frontale lyn gestaan en elke student kon deeglik die hantering van die bewapening bemeester. Die 20 mm se knal het nie gestop nie. As die een klaar was met sy teiken het die volgende student ingeklim agter die visiere.



Vasbyt

Ons uithouvermoë is beproef tydens die vasbyt roetmars tussen Bloemfontein en Dewetsdorp. Ons het die Maandagoggend so 03:00 begin en sou drie dae en nagte geduur oor 'n afstand van omtrent 150 km. Ons roete het gekronkel deur die agter plaaspaaie. Ons was in seksies verdeel en elke seksie het 'n telefoonpaal gehad om te dra en ook 'n Ratelband om te rol. Dan ook 'n draagbaar waarop van tyd tot tyd soos deur die instrukteur bepaal, iemand moes lê.



Meg Opleiding

Tydens die Bestuur en Onderhoud het ons die Ratel van hoek tot kant leer ken. Die enjin en ratkas en hoe om basiese herstel te doen. Dan natuurlik die bestuur van die Ratel op alle terrein, die oorsteek van basiese hindernisse, padbeweging – dus alles waartoe die Ratel in staat toe is ervaar en bedryf. Daarna het ons lisensies gekry.



Taktiese Opleiding



Ons is daarna Lohathla toe vir so twee of drie weke. Hier het ons die taktiese aanwending van die Ratel geleer. Die ry van formasies, skiethaltes, maneuevering, konvoobeweging, oorsteek van hindernisse – om maar 'n paar te noem. Dit was nodig want die Pl/OO of Spes Korporaal in die peloton was verantwoordelik vir die beheer van die Ratels wanneer die peloton bevelvoerder uitgestap het om die aanval te voet aan te voer. Dit was dan ook sy taak om die leë Ratels na 'n vuursteunbasis te ontplooi om die peloton se aanval te ondersteun met die Ratels se bewapening.



Grootfontein en Verder



Ons afsluiting van die taktiese fase was 'n deeglike stalparade. Dit het die heel dag geduur. Ons het die volgende oggend terug gery na Bloemfontein.

Ons het geweet dat diep in Angola die oorlog voortwoed. Met die twee van ons instruktors wat teruggekeer het van Angola se vertellings kon ons aflei van hoe dit was. Ons Kursus leiers was ook ou oorlogsveterane en ons opleiding was dan ook baie realisties.

Grens Toe

En toe die dag waaop ons gewag het. Waarvoor ons lang ure en slapelose nagte gehad het. Die groep kandidaat offisiere (Peloton bevelvoerders), onder korporaa's (pl Sersante en Pl/OO) wat na 61 Meg verplaas sou word is uitgeroep. Ons was uiteindelik op pad na die grens waar ons nuwe troepe reeds op ons gewag het. En die ou leiergroep het angstig gewag om afgelos te word.

Ons was per vliegtuig vervoer en het op 'n snikhete Grootfontein geland. Die warm lug wat mens sommer dadelik sweterig laat voel. Met die geskarrel om bagasie en die pak en klim op die oop transport trok, wat ons na Omuthiya sou vervoer het die peloton 2 bevelvoerder 'n ongeluk gehad. Dit sou hom vir 'n paar dae in die hospitaal laat beland. Toe Jaco Cronje op die trok klim het sy voet gegly en het hy wydsbeen baie hard op die troktradies laat beland. Die man het baie pyn gehad en hulle het hom dokter toe gevat. Ons het sonder hom vertrek. Hy het later weer by ons aangesluit.

Ons was op pad na 'n unieke jaar waarin waarin baie dinge gebeur het. Die rit van Grootfontein na Tsumeb sowat 60 km het gestrek deur tipiese boerdery gebied. By Tsumeb, so is ons meegedeel, was die Admin HK van 61 Meg. Ons is verder noord sowat 120 km na die 61 operasionele basis te Omuthiya. Met die oorsteek van die Ovambo grenspos was ons amptelik in die "Rooi Gebied" en nog so 20 km vandaar het ons van die teerpad afgedraai by die padbord wat aangedui het dat ons by Omuthiya was. Nog so 2 km op die wit pad en die basis het voor ons gelê. Ons was ontvang deur die ou leiergroep en ons het die slaaptente in die Oosbasis betrek. Ons het ons R4's getrek en ons beddegoed. Ons het lang gesprekke met die ou leiergroep gehad. Dit wou voorkom of Peloton 2 maar 'n woelige klomp was. Die volgende dag kon ons ons pelotons kies. Omdat ons luit in Grootfontein agtergebly het, het ek en die peloton sersant Willie Cloete opgeëindig met Pl 2. Terugdenkend was dit so beskore. Saam-saam het ons mekaar geslyp.

Die tweede aand moes ons ingelyf word. Dit het die vorm aangeneem van die drink van die "Omuthiya





Special". Dit was 'n bierbeker gevul met iets van elke tipe hardhout op die rak. Dan opgevul met 'n bier. Dan kon ons die Coutry Club se register teken en was volwaardig lede van die Oosbasis.

Vir die res van Desember tot middel Maart het ons heropleiding saam met ons troepe gedoen. Dit was ons eerste werklike blootstelling aan 61 Meg in Veg-groep verband. Alles was konvensionele oorlog gerig. Samewerking met artillerie, pantser, tenks en selfs die lugmag. Die Impala vliegtuie het ook Migs voorgestel en het ons geleer om vinnig onder dekking in te beweeg. Die opleiding was hard, dag en nag – maar baie realisties.



Daar was geen ernstige insidente by Bravo Kompanie nie. Ek het net een tragiese voorval gesien waar 'n Kwê met troepe agterop op pad terug van Tsumeb af onklaar geraak het. Die recovery voertuig het hom gaan hak en ingesleep. By die afdraai na Omuthiya het hulle beheer verloor en die Kwê het gerol.



Massa Drywers Opleiding

Maar die hooftema van die tyd was gerig op die onttrekking van die SAW uit SWA. Massas Casspirs, Buffels, Genie uitrusting en logistieke voertuie moes terug gery of gelaai word. Daarvoor was drywers nodig, wat die SAW nie gehad het nie. Sowat 150 troepe is toe vanuit die subeenhede getrek vir massa drywers opleiding. Hulle het hulle swaar voertuig lisensie ontvang en was gebruik vir die konvooi suidwaarts.

Ek was deel van so 'n konvooi. Ons het 150 Casspirs afgery na Wonderboom en is toe per vliegtuig terug



na Grootfontein.

Verlof en "Aprils Fool"

Ons het op twee weke verlof vertrek om weer 30 Maart terug op Omuthiya te wees. Ons is heen en weer gevlieg en die normale padbeweging tussen Omuthiya en Grootfontein. Die meeste van die kompanie was teen 31 Maart terug, maar nie almal nie. En toe op 1 April het Swapo oor die grens gestroom. Ons is ontplooi.

Sommer van vroeg af op 1 April het die gerugte die rondte gedoen dat Swapo in massa oor die grens gestroom het. Omdat dit 1 April was het almal gedink dit is 'n "Aprils Fool" grap. Hoe later dit geword het, hoe meer het ons besef dat daar miskien waarheid in steek. Dit was eers toe ons opdrag ontvang het dat ons met kit by die Ratels moes aanmeld dat dit ernstig begin lyk het. Maar selfs toe het ons nog halfhartig gewonder of dit nie maar net 'n manier was van die leiergroep om ons besig en parraat te hou nie. Eers toe ons begin beweeg, het die dodelike erns deurgedring.

Die 9 Dae Oorlog 1 tot 3 April

Die eerste twee dae kon ons geen aanduiding van Swapo kry nie.

Op 3 April het ons baie vroeg die Swapo spoor gekry. Ons was weer saam met 101 Bn. Ons het heeldag op die spoor gebly. Dit was moeilik om te volg omdat as ons te naby gekom het, het hulle die besproeiings kanaal gekruis. Dan moes ons met die voertuie eers weer 'n kruising soek. Net om weer die spoor te hervat todat hulle weer na die anderkant van die kanaal kruis. Laاتمیددag om 17:03 toe slaan ons kontak.

Toe die kontak begin het Koevoet van die kant af ingekom en deel van die aanval geword. Dit was maar 'n deurmekaarspul met voertuie wat oral jaag en skiet. Dit is daar waar 2 Lt Els geskiet was. Waarskynlik deur 'n Koevoet dwaal koeël. Daar het so 'n paar Swapo's gesneuwel.



4 April tot 20 Julie

Ons het eers weer terug gekeer na Omuthiya op 20 Julie. Die ontplooiing op 1 April was so skielik en onverwags dat meeste van ons net een stel Browns saamgevat het. Soos die weke verbygegaan het, het ons maar ons klere aangevul as iemand toevallig terug Omuthiya toe gegaan het. Ons moes oorleef vir byna 4 maande leef en oorleef met dit wat ons gehad het.

Tydens die 9 Dag Oorlog (1 tot 9 April) het ons met mobiele patrollies die gebied tussen Ruacana en Oshakati aktief deurkruis. En toe dit verby was het ons voortgegaan met gebiedspatrollies. Ons het nie weer Swapo terrs raakgeloop nie, maar Koevoet het wel. Koevoet het hulle "kills" afgevoer na die naaste SAW basis. Van daar af is die headcount dan deurgegee en was die lyke beskikbaar vir verifikasie deur UNTAG. Van die lyke was redelik voos geskiet en is op die modderskerms vasgemaak om te verseker dat die bemannings kompartement nie met bloed bemors word nie.

Na die 9 Dae Oorlog het ons gebieds operasies ge doen om Oshakati en wes daarvan. Meesal het ons Ombalatu gebruik as hoof basis. Behalwe vir 3 April se groot kontak waar 2 Lt Els gesneuwel het, het ons geen verdere kontakte beleef nie. Tot Julie het ons Swapo Soek-en-Vernietig operasies gedoen. Omdat ons nie spoorsnyers gehad het nie het ons aktief saam met 101 Bn gewerk. Boonop het 101 Bn die terrein goed geken en jare se ondervinding gehad van Swapo Soek-en-Jag.

Na 2 Lt Els se dood was ons maar skepties vir Koevoet. Dat hulle suksesse behaal het, dit is so. Maar om saam met 'n georganiseerde mag soos 61 Meg te

werk het probleme en fatale foute tot gevolg gehad.

Ons het ons Pro Patria Medaljes en ons 61 Messies net na die 9 Dag oorlog ontvang.

Dit was 'n goeie reënseisoen en die shonas was vol water. Die wit sand van Owamboland was bedrieglik. Party plekke is die sand ferm terwyl op ander plekke lyk dit ferm, maar dit is net 'n dun laag. As 'n voertuig deur die wit sand trap was dit in 'n taai suigende modder vasgevang.



Op een van ons mobiele patrolies het die pad waarop ons gery het deur 'n sjona gegaan. 'n Ander pad het die een gekruis. Dan was daar ook 'n sirkelpad om die sjona. Die voorste Ratel moes links draai op die kruis om die sirkelpad te gebruik. Hy het dit nie gedoen nie en in die moddergedeelte van die sjona beland. Daar het hy deeglik vasgeval. Dit het 'n groot poging gevat om die Ratel te herwin. Terwyl ons daarmee besig was het 'n paar donkies van links af gekom en op die plek waar die dwarspad kruis 'n voertuigmyn afgetrap.

Dit was so 300 meter van ons af. Ek weet nie hoeveel donkies in die trop was nie, want die ontploffing het die brokstukke wyd versprei. Die een donkie op die foto was ook mordsdood maar het in een stuk gebly.

Sou die vassit Ratel die afdraai op die kringpad gevat het, sou hy waarskynlik die landmyn afgetrap het. Ons het uiteindelik die Ratel uit die modder kon kry. Met dankbaarheid het ons besef dat ons sopas 'n noue ontkoming gehad het.



Met ons terugkeer na Omuthiya op 20 Julie het ons weer 'n deeglike voertuig onderhoud program geloods. Ons het voortgegaan met opleiding op die

skietbane noord van Omuthiya. Untag moes altyd saam wees. Dit was ook in die tyd wat al die ou ammunisie vernietig moes word. Ons het die magasyn leeg gemaak. Die geseelde ammunisie is terug gelaai op die logistieke lyn en die res is noord van Omuthiya in verskeie batches vernietig. Seker meer as 20 hope.



Laaste Omuthiya Parade

Ons laaste groot aktiwiteit op Omuthiya was 'n bataljon parade wat deur onder andere die media ook bygewoon is. Kmdt Muller het medaljes en sertifikate toegeken en ons toegesprek. Daarna het die Sammajoor van die Weermag AO J Holliday ons toegesprek. Daar was statiese uitstallings van wapentuig en natuurlik was Untag ook daar.





61 Word Opgedeel

In September is die eenheid opgedeel en op verskillende standplase hervestig. Die Pantser het op Omuthiya agtergebly. Die Artillerie na Dolfyn Basis as ek reg onthou. Bravo Kompanie het getrek na 'n kamp sowat 6 km noord van Oshivello hek. Vandaar sou ons later Walvisbaai toe vertrek. Ons het maar daaglikse werkspanne na Omuthiya en Grootfontein moes stuur. Verder het ons nie veel gedoen op ons Oshivello Basis nie.





Rooikop

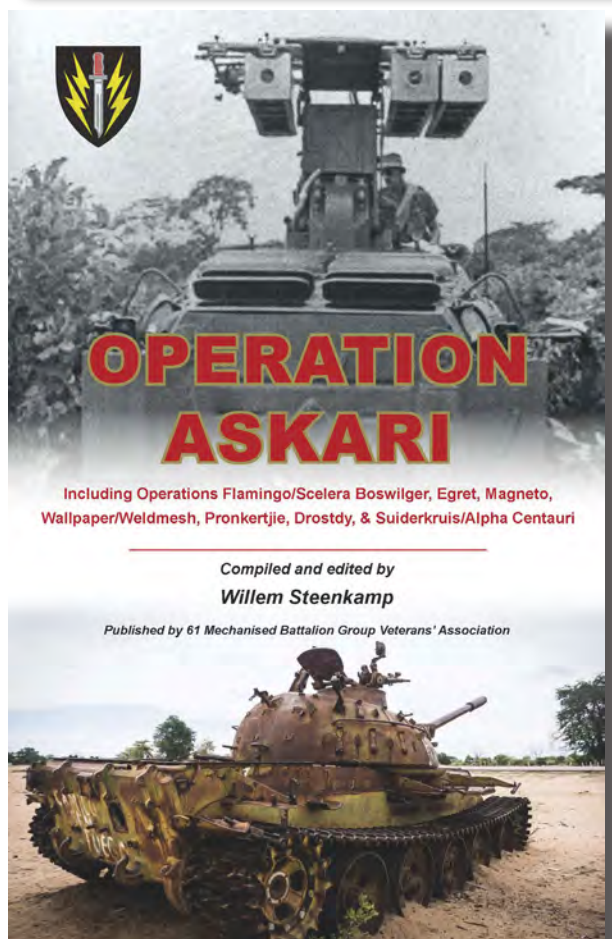
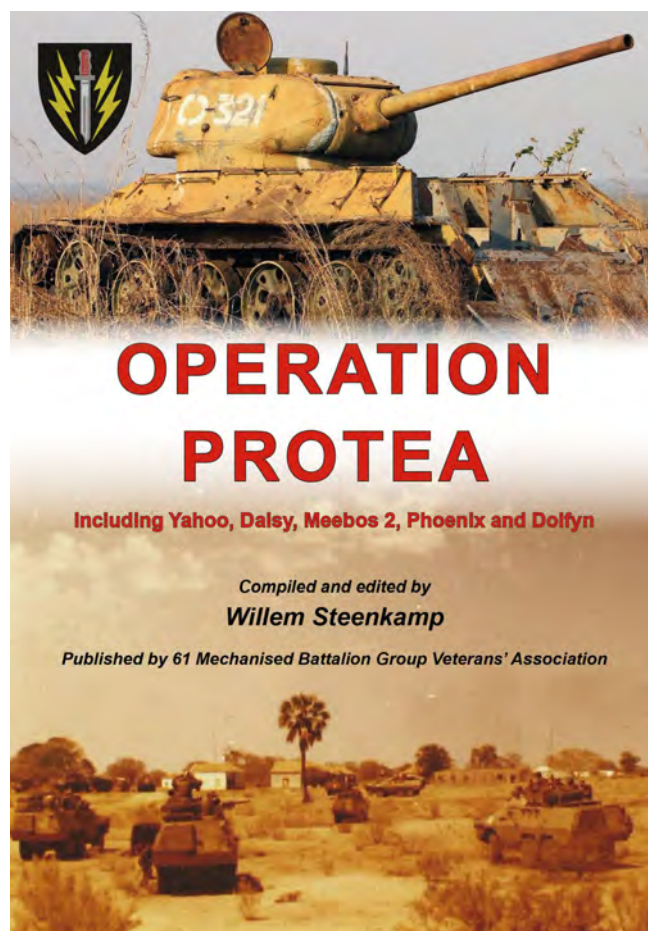
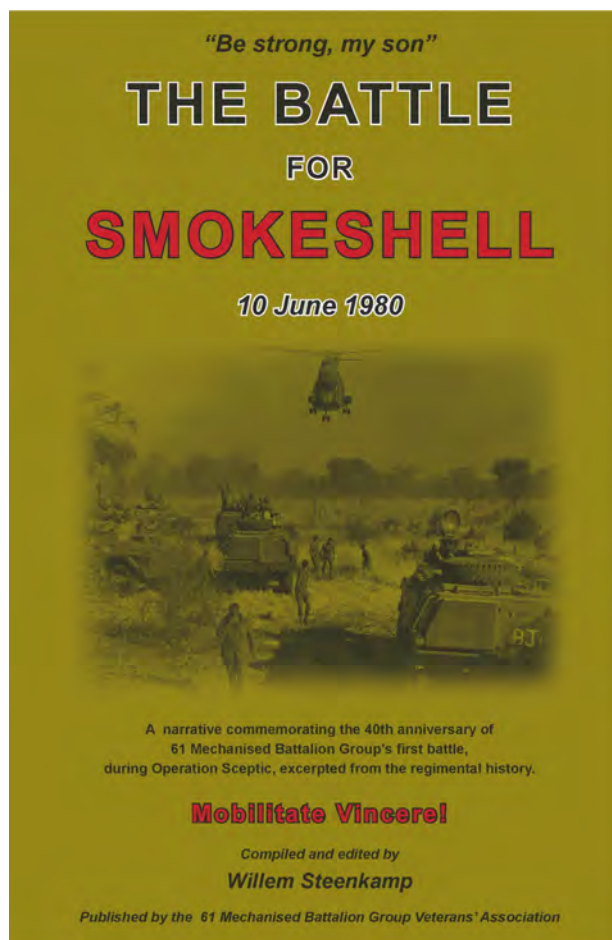
Begin November het 61 Meg begin oppak en begin verhuis na Rooikop te Walvisbaai. Ons het gevestig op Rooikop Basis met net 'n paar weke oor voordat ons uitgeklaar het. Toe die hele eenheid ingesetel het, het Kmdt Muller 'n groot battaljons parade gehou. Dit het toe ook sommer gedien as ons uitpasserings parade. Bravo Kompanie moes die paradedgrond gelyk maak. Dit het ons gedoen deur troepe in n stagger lyn te laat loop, elkeen met 'n badkamer squeegee. Maar toe ons klaar was, was die paradedgrond spieëlglad.

Uitklaar

Een goeie oggend was dit alles verby. Uitklaartyd het aangebreek. Daar was sewe vliegtuie aangelê om die Bataljon terug na Waterkloof toe te vlieg. Die eerste ses was die normale troeperings Hercules vliegtuie. Ek het gewag op die sewende vliegtuig. En toe hy land sou ons sien dat dit 'n Safair Boeing was. Ek kon in styl terugvlieg.

Twee jaar
Swoeg en Sweet
Frustrasie en Plesier
'n Groep mense wat ek nooit sal vergeet nie.





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Share Your Skills

Deel Jou Vaardighede

Die Kuns In Die Brou Van Die 61 Meg Lager Bier



*Deur
Rodger Fritz
Rooikat Eskadron
1993*

This Supplement Series forms part of the 61 MVA Quaterly Journal where 61 Mech Veterans can share their skills with their fellow Veterans

Hierdie Reeks Bylaes vorm deel van die 61 MVB Kwartaal Joernaal waar 61 Meg Veterane hul vaardighede met hul mede-Veterane kan deel

Die Broumeester

Rodger Fritz is 'n 61 Meg Veteraan uit die jaar 1993 en was deel van die Rooikat Eskadron.



Hoe het die Lohathla stof my smaak vir bier gevorm?

Die stof van Lohathla het 'n ystererts smaak in my mond gelos. Die hitte het dit nog erger gemaak. Die beste oplossing na 'n dag van konvooi ry en die Rooikatte voor my se stof eet tydens brigade oefeninge was 'n yskoue bier. Troepe het in hierdie tyd nie juis maandeliks baie geld verdien nie en die goedkoopste lafenis was maar 'n bier. Meeste van ons geld het gegaan vir die yskoue biere na lang dag in die stof en hitte. 'n Yskoue bier was altyd 'n wenner maar ek het begin dink daaraan om die smaak selfs te verbeter –hoekom by die norm hou?

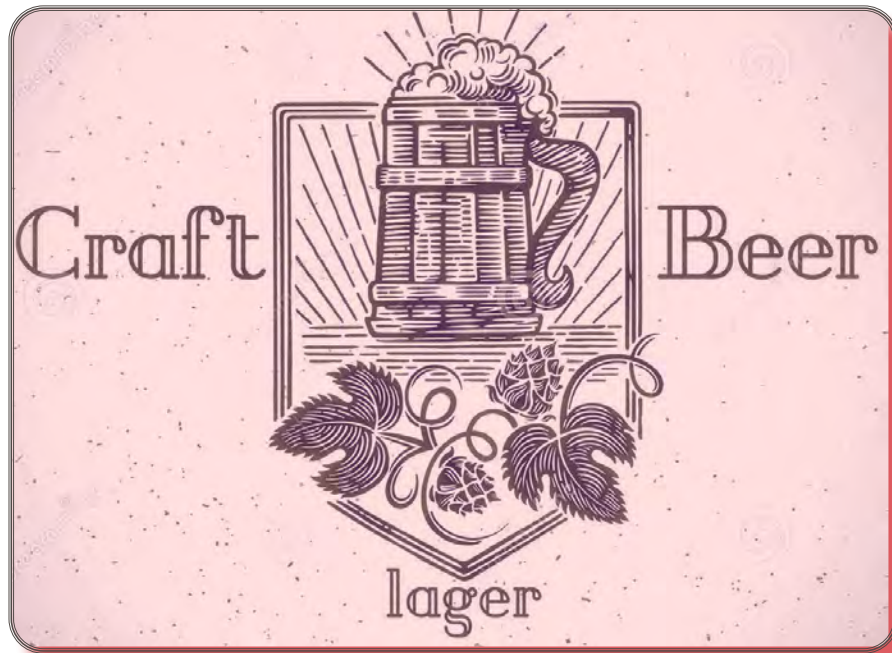
Ek het gesoek na 'n bier wat se smaak bietjie langer op die tong sou bly en langer onthou sal word as iets anders as die gewone. Sowat 4 jaar terug het ek besluit om die brou van 'n 61 Meg Lager aan te pak. Ek het die nodige uitrusting aangeskaf en begin eksperimenteer met smake en geure. Na “trial and error” waartydens ek 'n paar pryse gekry het vir my “Craft Beer” het ek op een besondere smaak afgekom - Daardie smaak wat ek in 1993 so lus voor was.

Die smaak van hierdie lager het my onmiddelik laat terug dink aan my tyd in 61 MEG en hoe die bier aan die einde van die dag my dors sou les. Dit het 'n efektiewe smaak om nostalgiese herhinneringe van die tyd in Lohathla: die ystererts stof smaak en die hitte na 'n lang dag in iets spesiaal te omskep en te laat besef dat die tyd daar een van die lekkerste tye in my lewe was. 'n Tyd van uiterse deursetting, fisiese en emosionele uitdagings, oppies, staal perades, inspeksies, 2.4km en, wie sal ooit die reuk van 'n weermag tent kan vergeet? En, die bier sal 'n ratpack in 'n fyn proewers dis omskep.

Ek deel graag my resep met my mede 61 Meg Veterane.



General Information



What's a Lager?

The word lager comes from a German word meaning “to store.” A lager is a beer that uses yeast strains that are cultured to ferment at the bottom of the fermentation vessel at low temperatures (34°F to 50°F), resulting in a long fermentation time (weeks to months). Lager yeast produces fewer by-product characters than does ale yeast, which tends to create a cleaner, crisper taste (there are exceptions).

Terminologie

RO water	Dit is 'n water suiweringsproses waardeur alle ongewenste dele en chemikalieë uit water verwyder word om dit te suiwer vir gebruik - geken as “reverse osmosis”.
Gypsum	Gips.
Chalk	Gewone bord kryt.
Spardge	Spoel van graan met verhitte water.
Hot Break	Dik skuim laag wat vorm op die malt uittreksel voor die water kook.
Gravitasie lesing	Hoeveelheid suiker wat uit graan onttrek is.
Carbonation	Die proses om gas in die vloeistof te sit.



VERSKAFFERS VAN BESTANDELE EN TOEBEHORE

. Beer Bros	Hillcrest Durban
. Brew Mart	Eldoraigne, Centurion
. Benoni Brew	Brentwood Park, Benoni
. Beer Lab	Pinelands, Kaapstad



Kort Geskiedenis van Bier en die brou daarvan

Bier se ontstaan was in die distrik van die antieke Mesopotamië – vandag se moderne Iran.

Mense het 5000 jaar terug graan en die verbou van graan ontdek. Die ontwikkeling van bier was toevallig. Dit het begin toe mense geleer het om graankorrels in brood te verwerk. Hulle het die graan in water laat le om dit sag te maak soos 'n pap anders was dit baie taai en hard om te verteer.

Sterilisering het gebeur omdat die graan en water warm gemaak is en laat staan is. Dit het bakterieë dood gemaak. Die graan brousel se samestelling het verander nadat fermentasie begin het. Hulle het agter gekom dat die smaak en uitwerking verander het. Gis het op die brousel gaan sit en die suurstof daarin begin gebruik. Die suiker in die graan word onttrek wanneer die graan staan. Die gis sit dan die suiker om in alkohol.

Bier was in daardie tyd vir huishoudelike gebruik gebrou. Die oudste bewyse van bier is gevind op tablette wat in Mesopotamië gevind is. Dit beskryf 'n drankie wat die gemeenskap saam deur riet strooitjies uit a 'n bak gedrink het. Die oudste resep vir bier is gevind wat Ninkasi, godin van brou vereer het. Dit beskryf die produksie van bier van brood wat met barley gemaak is.

'n Interessante feit is dat vrouens aanvanklik verantwoordelik was vir die brou van bier en dat dit later van tyd veral in kloosters gebrou was. Bier was gesien as 'n drankie wat saam met etes gedrink moes word. Dit beskryf ook dat mense baie gesellig en vrolik gemaak is wanneer hulle die drankie gedrink het..

General Principles

If you are going to be a home brewer, you'd better become reconciled with becoming a janitor too. 80-90% of your activity as a home brewer is cleaning – cleaning, sanitizing, cleaning up after, and sanitizing again. If you're not willing to put the time and effort into doing it right and thoroughly, you might as well start looking for a different hobby right away.



Uitrusting benodig

Ek gebruik die “Grain Father G30”

Slanke 304-graad vlekvrystaal huls

'n Robuuste magnetiese dryfpomp vir maksimum broudoeltreffendheid

'n Uittrekbare graanmandjie wat ontwerp is om verskillende gewigte graan te hou

Doeltreffende en sanitêre brou-oordrag met die teenvloei-wortverkoeler

Maar daar is verskeie ander modelle beskikbaar. Jy kan ook improviseer met jou instrumente.





Bestandele

- 28L RO Water
- 2kg Pilsner Malt
- 2kg Vienna Malt
- 250g Melanoldin Malt
- 250g Carapils Malt
- 35g Saaz HOPS (60 Min)
- 15g Saaz HOPS (30min)
- 5ml Irish Moss (10 min)
- Mangrove Jacks French Saison Yeast M29

1

Verhit 23L water in “Grain Father G30” tot 72°

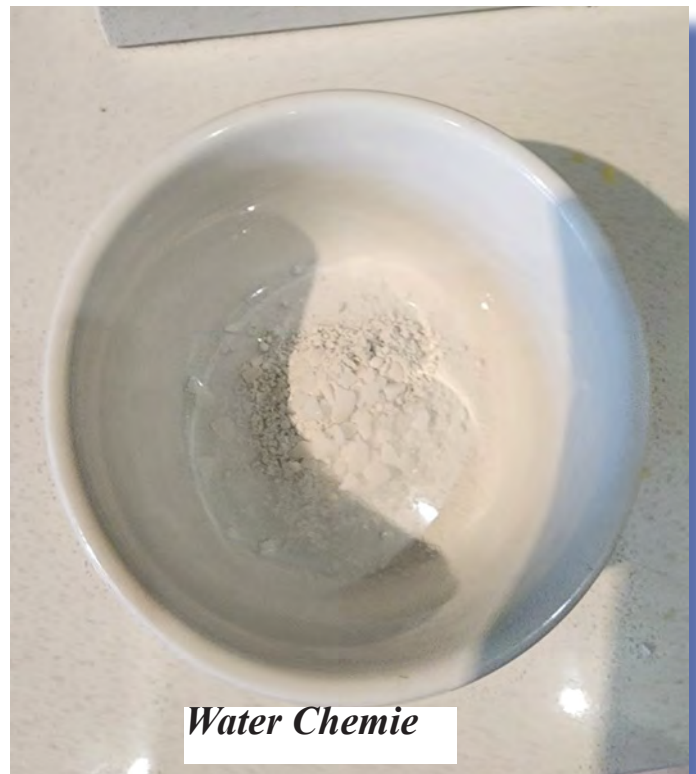


2

RO Water het geen chemikalieë, daarom moet water chemie gedoen word. Dit word gedoen deur die volgende brou soute by te voeg:

- 1g Chalk CaCO_3
- 2g Koeksoda NaHCO_3
- 2g Gypsum CASO_4
- 2g Calsium Chloried CACL_2
- 2g Engelse Sout MGSO_4
- 2g Tafel Sout NACU

Voeg die bogenoemde soute by die water en roer deeglik



Water Chemie

General Principles

Homebrewing is easy. Can you boil water? How about measuring dry and liquid ingredients and putting them in boiling water? Can you read a clock? A thermometer? A hydrometer? Can you wash and sanitize equipment? Can you pour stuff without getting it all over the floor? Doing all of these things is easy. Doing them at the right time and in the right order can be hard – so WRITE OUT A CHECK LIST AND SCHEDULE AND FOLLOW IT!

3

Voeg die graan by wanneer die water 72°C bereik het. Al die graan is gemeng en fyn gemaal. Die graan moet stadig bygevoeg word terwyl dit deeglik deur geroer word.

Maak seker dat daar geen klonte of enige graan teen die kante vassit nie.



Fyngemaalde graan mengsel



Graan word by verhitte water gegooi



General Principles

For good beer it is critical to sanitize everything that will touch your beer. But sanitization only means to decrease populations of microorganisms to insignificant levels. It is different from sterilization, which means wiping out every single microorganism on every surface. Although not sanitizing carefully enough is the most common mistake newbies make, don't obsess with it. Clean and sanitize as well as you can, and then forget about it. You're making beer here, not performing surgery.

4

Water temperatuur sal val wanneer die graan bygevoeg word. Bring die water temperatuur op na 65°C toe. Stel die tyd vir 1 uur sodra die water temperatuur 65°C bereik het. Die graan moet teen hierdie temperatuur vir 1 uur staan.

Die “Grain Father” het ‘n pomp wat die water gedurende hierdie uur die hele tyd deur die graan pomp. Die deksel bly ten alle tye op tydens die proses. (Hierdie deel van die proses word die “vorlauf” genoem).



Graan en water mengsel in graan mandjie



Graan in onttrekkings proses

5



Graan Mandjie op “Grain Father”

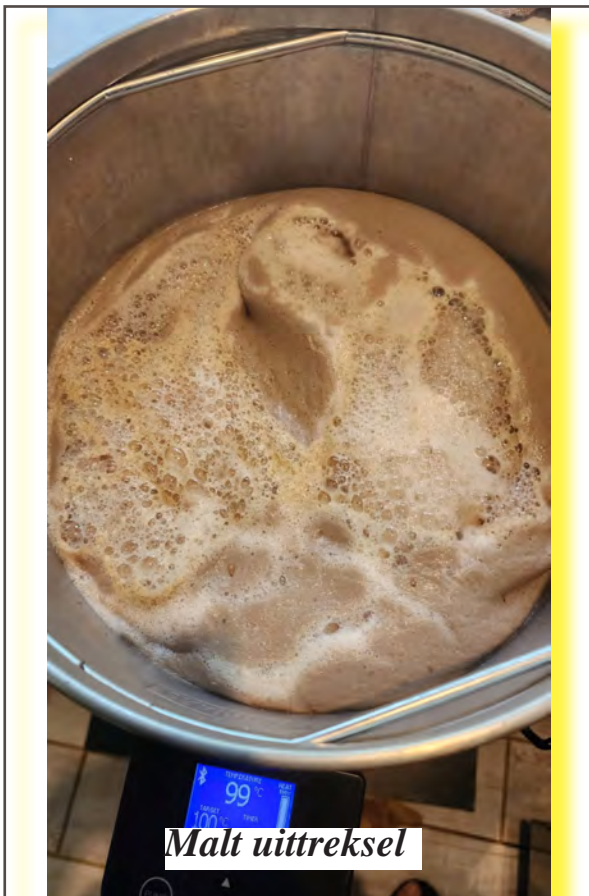
Verhit 5L water na 76 °C. Lig die graan mandjie uit die malt uittreksel wanneer die uur verby is. Die mandjie met die graan word nou bo op die “Grain Father” in gehak sodat alle vloeistof kan dreineer. Spoel die graan in die mandjie met die verhitte 5L water. (Hierdie spoel proses word die “sparge” genoem).

Stel die hitte van die “Grain Father” op 100°C. Die mandjie met die graan word verwyder sodra daar geen meer vloeistof uit die graan drup nie.



Al wat nou in die “Grain Father” oor bly is die malt uittreksel. Die malt uittreksel sal begin kook op 99°C tot 100°C. Dit sal ‘n dik skuim laag vorm. Dit word die “hot break” genoem. Die hops mandjie word in die mengsel geplaas sodra die skuim weg gekook het.

Stel jou tyd vir 60 minute en voeg die eerste 35g Saaz hops by. Voeg nog 35g Saaz hops by na 30 minute verloop het. Voeg 10ml Irish Moss by wanneer net 10 minute van die tyd oor is. (Irish Moss help met die helderheid van die bier).



Malt uittreksel



Hops Mandjie



Hops en Irish Moss

Interessante inligting:

Hops is ontsettend giftig vir honde.

Die graan wat oorbly is baie goed vir honde en plante.

Die graan word ook gebruik om bederf eetgoed vir honde te maak.

Die graan kan ook uit gegooi word vir voëls.

Nadat die malt uittreksel vir 60 minute gekook het word die hops mandjie verwyder en die hops word weg gegooi.

Die afkoel proses begin nou.

Die gis wat gebruik is, is aktief tussen 18°C en 20°C.

Die deksel word terug gesit en die verkoelings apparaat word aan die koue water kraan en die “Grain Father”. gekoppel.

Terwyl die verkoelings proses aangaan word die fermenteerder met geen spoel ontsmettingsmiddel uitgewas. Hierdie is ’n baie belangrike deel van die brou proses. Dit verhoed dat enige bakterieë die bier opneuk nie.

Sodra die malt uittreksel 22°C bereik word die vloeistof vanaf die “Grain Father” na die fermenteerder oorgetap.

Die gis word nou bo op die vloeistof in die fermenteerder gesprinkel.

’n Gravitatie lesing word nou geneem om te bepaal hoeveel suiker in die malt uittreksel is. Die lesing moet tussen 1040 en 1050 wees. Dit word die oorspronklike gravitasie lesing genoem.

Die fermenteerder word nou geseël en ’n “bubbler” met ontsmettingsmiddel word bo op die fermenteerder geplaas.

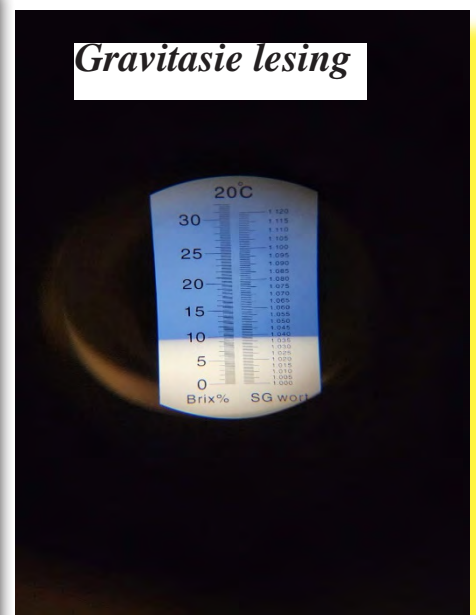


Die verkoeling proses

Die Malt uittreksel word na fermenteerder oorgetap



Gravitatie lesing



‘n Yskas is omskep in a fermenteer apparaat met ‘n temperatuur reguleerder.

Dit is belangrik dat die fermenteer temperatuur konstant moet bly gedurende die fermenterings proses.

Die temperatuur reguleerder word gestel om die temperatuur teen 20°C te hou om toe te laat dat die gis die maksimum suiker in alkohol omskep.

Die gis proses op hierdie spesifieke tipe bier sal fermenteer vir 15 dae.

Die temperatuur sal daarna af gestel word na 2° vir 2 tot 4 dae. Dit word die “cold crash” proses genoem. Hierdie proses is belangrik want dit help dat al die sediment afsak en dat die bier helder is



Fermenteerder in yskas



Temperatuur reguleerder gestel op 20°C



An Elegant Marriage of Ingredients

Beer is composed of four main ingredients: malt, hops, yeast, and water. Malt is responsible for supplying much of the flavor, color, and texture of beer. Malt also provides a food supply for the yeast during brewing. Hops provide bitterness to balance the sweet sugars in the malt. The cone-shaped flower also adds aroma and flavor, and even helps to stabilize and preserve the flavor of beer. Yeast convert sugars from the malt into alcohol and carbon dioxide through a natural process called fermentation. Water is the vehicle through which all of the ingredients interact.

Na die “cold crash” proses is die bier gereed om gebottel te word.

Die bier word uit fermenteerder getap in ‘n bottel emmer.

‘n Finale gravitasie lesing word geneem. Die lesing behoort tussen 1005 en 1010 te wees. Die alkohol persentasie sal 5.2% wees.

‘n Tafel suiker en water mengsel word gemaak en by die emmer bier gevoeg. Die suiker en gis wat in die bier is veroorsaak uiteindelik die gas in die bier.

Die bier word dan in 440ml botteltjies getap. Die bottels en doppies word altyd vooraf gedisinfecteer met die nie spoelbare disinfekteer middel.

Doppies word op die bottels geplaas en geseel en die bier word verpak en in ‘n donker warm plek gelos vir 14 dae.

22:14 15%

← Carbonation Calculator ⋮

Priming size **23** Liters ▾

Volumes of CO₂ **2.4**

Beer temperature **22** °C ▾

Priming sugar amount

Table sugar 146.29 g

Corn sugar 160.70 g

DME 215.12 g

Carbonation guidelines

British Ale	1.5 - 2.0 volumes
Porter, Stout	1.7 - 2.3 volumes
Belgian Ales	1.9 - 2.4 volumes
Lager/American Ale	2.2 - 2.7 volumes
Lambic	2.4 - 2.8 volumes
Fruit Lambic	3.0 - 4.5 volumes
German Wheat	3.3 - 4.5 volumes

||| ○ <



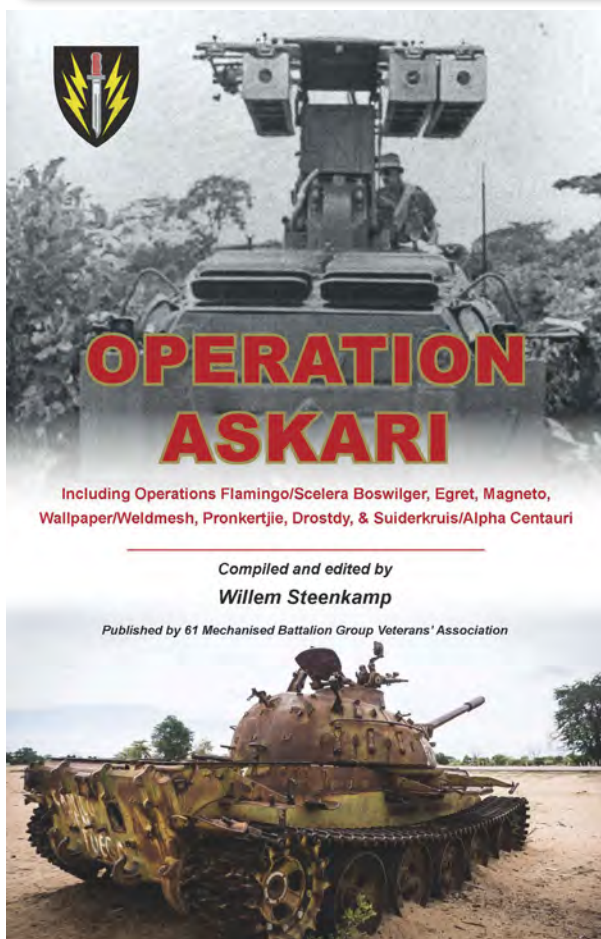
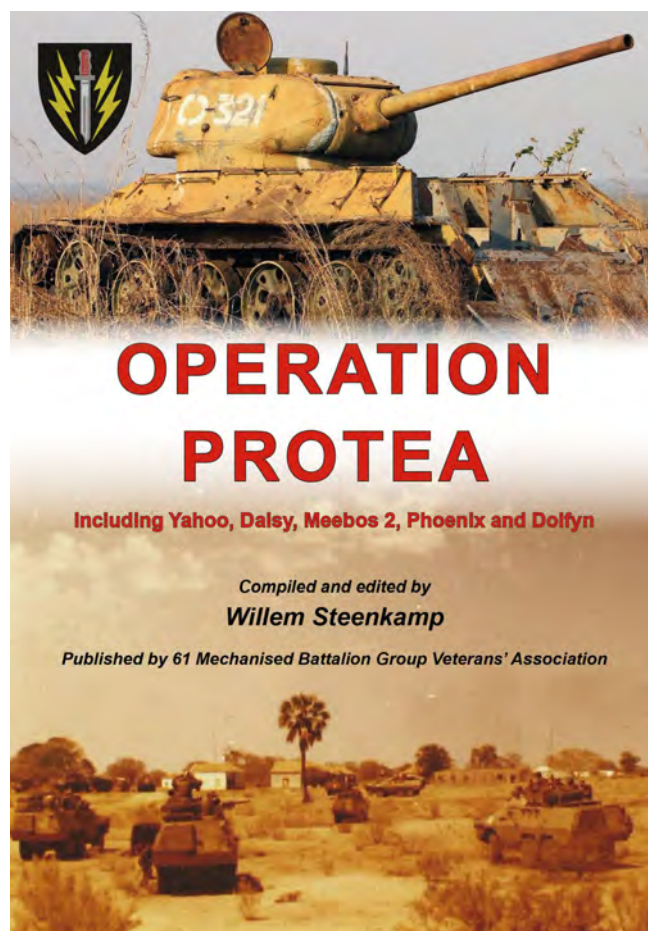
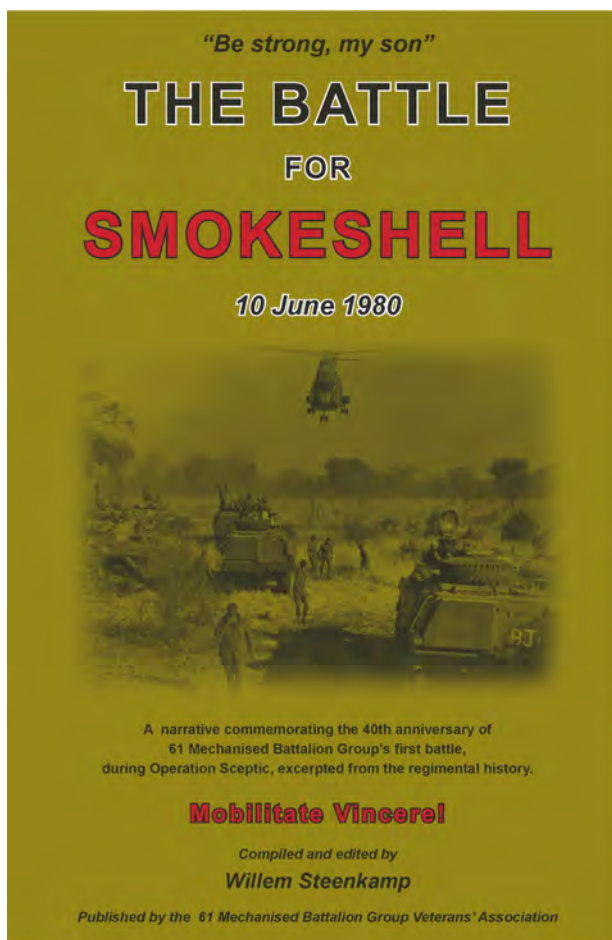
DIE FINALE 61 MEG LAGER PRODUK

NOTA: MAAK DIT LEKKER YS KOUD.....EN GENIET

(Matigheid voor oë manne!!)

Bier trots gebrou deur Rodger Fritz, Maqs nommer: 90506155BG





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